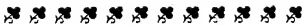


# ANTHONY TROLLOPE



## Aspects of His Life and Art

BY BRADFORD A. BOOTH



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TO ❀

THREE IRREPRESSIBLE GIRLS

AND TO THEIR MOTHER



## PREFACE ❧

THIS BOOK does not attempt a complete appraisal of Trollope's fiction, nor does it advance any novel thesis or interpretation. Rather, it has been my purpose to examine, first, how Trollope's view of the world determined the nature of his fiction, as seen primarily in novels concerned with the two social areas which stimulated his imagination most fruitfully—the clerical and the political; and second, how early nineteenth-century traditions and techniques in the novel, which he accepted, governed his own practice in the use of the elements of fiction. It has been appropriate from time to time to investigate Trollope's opinions on a number of subjects, but I have not concerned myself with biography as such, there being little that one can add to Mr. Sadleir's admirable study of thirty years ago. I have found it necessary in the first chapter, however, to re-examine Trollope's character, both because the recent edition of his letters provides new information and because the latest portrait-study is based on an interpretation of his personality that strikes me as quite mistaken and indeed demonstrably false.

In Part One, therefore, I have attempted to give a coherent picture of Trollope, and of the affirmations and prejudices of character which determine his nationalism and his internationalism. This is followed by two long chapters dealing with the ecclesiastical and political worlds, and with those aspects of contemporary society which he felt called upon to treat satirically.

In Part Two I have endeavored as best I can to provide an analysis of Trollopian materials and methods. In spite of the tremendous

interest in Trollope's novels which developed as a wartime phenomenon and the resultant attention from critics, there has been no exhaustive critical study. The present volume was originally designed and written to serve this purpose. But several considerations, among them primarily the indicated need to cut down a very long manuscript, prompted a thorough revision into the form of a series of essays. It might be well to add here that one of my purposes throughout has been to investigate and to comment on the vagaries of Trollope's reputation. The novels of no other writer have elicited such widespread disagreement, producing a situation which I have discussed both in connection with individual novels and in my last chapter under the title "The Chaos of Criticism."

After my manuscript was in the publisher's hands there appeared A. O. J. Cockshut's *Anthony Trollope: A Critical Study*. Since I have not been able to discuss this work in the text, perhaps I may be pardoned for saying a word about it here. Mr. Cockshut's study is relatively brief, treating at length only a few of the novels of Trollope's later years, but his criticism is generally thoughtful and intelligent, and his incisive remarks on several novels, notably *The Way We Live Now* and *Mr. Scarborough's Family*, have sharpened my own perception of Trollope's achievement in those works. But I think Mr. Cockshut's main thesis is wrong-headed. Like the Stebbinses he holds that Trollope's life was one long "progress to pessimism," that the novels from 1867 reveal each "a further stage in the steepening curve of the author's pessimism," and that as we watch Trollope we see "the gradual darkening of his imagination and failure of his hopes." With all this I strongly disagree. It arises from the fallacy of assuming that a creative artist necessarily reflects his own temper at the moment; it does not sufficiently consider the force of trends and fashions in art forms. It ignores the fact that in the 'fifties and 'sixties Trollope wrote early Victorian novels, as did every other writer who was trying to be popular. In the 'seventies this kind of novel no longer sufficed; witness the similar change in Dickens's work. Nothing, apparently, could be more savage than the indictment of English political and economic life in *The New Zealander* (1855), and nothing could be more gloriously optimistic

than the passage in the *Autobiography* which explains how the social philosophy of *The Way We Live Now* should be interpreted. In the Barsetshire group Trollope amused himself and us by picturing one aspect of English life; in the late novels he turned his attention to another. He had always known both. When late in his life he was asked why he did not write another Barset novel, he replied only that it would require too much work to go back through all the novels to pick up the continuity. But he did write shortly before his death an amusing novelette, *The Two Heroines of Plumpington*, which could scarcely be more lighthearted. I do not discount entirely the theory of some late intensification of Trollope's native hatred of sham and dishonesty, but, as I hope I have shown in Chapter I, it is seriously misleading as a thesis by which to explain his literary life.

There are several reasons for the general reluctance to study Trollope exhaustively. One is to be found in the vast and amorphous body of material to be covered. Another is perhaps to be found in the difficulty of judging it critically. Normally one approaches the work of a novelist from the point of view of the ideas that are developed or from the point of view of the techniques that are employed. But Trollope's novels do not deal primarily with ideas, and the technique is elementary. Chauncey B. Tinker, in his introduction to a recent edition of *The Duke's Children*, remarks, "I find it difficult to judge Trollope's novels by any ordinary standards or accepted rules." Precisely. His work resists the kind of formal analysis to which we subject our better fiction. He has seemed to offer himself more to the appreciative essayist than to the student of form or the student of ideas. But the essayists have usually introduced us to themselves rather than to Trollope, who continues to elude the critical grasp. I have tried first to indicate the temper of English fiction when Trollope began to write, together with a view of his own opinions on the craft of fiction. I have then followed with chapters on his handling of the elements of fiction as he understood the novel. It is very useful by way of showing the limitations of Victorian novelists to measure them by the standards of Henry James. This entails the use of the new critical vocabulary by means of

which we are now able to discuss prose fiction as a fine art. But the Jamesian approach is of limited help in the appreciation of Trollope's virtues as a novelist or the understanding of his concept of his craft.

It has been only within recent years, perhaps stemming from, or at least gaining impetus from, the renaissance of interest in James, that there has been any serious attempt to investigate fictional methods, and such studies exist for only a handful of novelists, such as Meredith, Hardy, and Conrad. Perhaps it is because the nineteenth-century novelist has been traditionally regarded as an entertainer rather than as an artist that we have come so tardily to recognize the need for the kind of analysis of fiction that has formerly been reserved for poetry and the drama. The present volume may be regarded as providing some of the background materials from which a close study of Trollope's novels should be written.

I do not mean to suggest, by the way, that I think the novel is simply a matter of technique. I have great admiration for Henry James, and I wish Trollope had some of James's dedication to his art. But I think the concentration on technique carries with it certain penalties. The Victorians were often careless, but they managed to infuse into their novels qualities which give their work a currency that has been little diminished either by time or by the development of more sophisticated approaches. The humor, the satire, the broad tolerance, the hard-headed common sense, the human understanding born of wide experience that are characteristic of the Victorian novel at its best are not always found in the work of more serious, more conscientious, more dedicated artists. This thought is basic in my approach to nineteenth-century fiction. I might add that I do not always see eye to eye with F. R. Leavis and the *Scrutiny* critics, though I salute their integrity and acknowledge the challenge of their work. They are quite right in calling our attention to the subtleties of conscious artistry, but in their *ex cathedra* condemnation of most of Dickens and Trollope, and apparently all of Thackeray, on the principal grounds that they lack high seriousness and have little interest in form, these critics have

defined the function of the novel very narrowly. Surely the house of fiction has many rooms.

It might be well that I should state here the conviction which underlies these studies. Anthony Trollope was not a man of transcendent genius but of extraordinary talent. It has become increasingly clear as certain prejudices have been dissipated, and I think it will remain true after some of the uncritical enthusiasm of recent years has blown away, that in Trollope English fiction had one of its enduring creative artists. It is my hope that this series of studies of the man and his art will contribute in some measure toward the understanding of literature's most popular form.

In the preparation of this volume I have incurred many obligations, several of which must be expressed here. To the Committee on Research of the University of California, Los Angeles, I am greatly indebted for the generous annual grants which enabled me to pursue these studies through the resources of a score of libraries here and abroad. To my colleague Professor Hugh G. Dick, who has collaborated with me on a study of Trollope's dramatic criticism, I have a special debt, not only for his long interest and active encouragement, but for his expert reading of the first draft of this book. It is also a pleasure to express my thanks for various favors to another Trollopian collaborator, Professor Donald Smalley of Indiana University, and to the Director of the Indiana University Press, Mr. Bernard B. Perry, whose thoughtfulness and cooperation were unfailing.





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✻ PART ONE

# The World of Anthony Trollope



# 1 TROLLOPE AND THE LIMITS OF HIS WORLD ❦

IN A WORLD of cryptic and often frightening uncertainties, when it is difficult to interpret the present and foolhardy to predict the future, it is pleasant to believe that at least we understand the past. As we look back toward the receding decades we become surer of our interpretations of history. The dubieties become clearer, the complexities are washed away, the contradictions dissolved, the exceptions wrung out. This is the perspective from which many observers still view the Victorian era. They see it as an uncomplicated period, with none of the harassments of our own. The peace of the Victorians would seem to be no less real than that of the Augustans. We are sometimes told that the people were essentially simple; that the times were essentially serene and sanguine; that "progress," which was taken for granted, was halted only by temporary reverses from which Victorians recovered into a more bumptious optimism than before. In fact, it has appeared to some commentators that Victorianism can be reduced to a few summary phrases: morality, optimism, imperialism, evolution, the Church of England, the sanctity of the Crown. Anything falling outside this classification is simply an aberrant mutation pointing up and emphasizing the homogeneity of the system.

Of the way of life represented by this system Anthony Trollope is frequently regarded as the most perfect exponent. In the orthodoxy of his personal life, in the serenity of his meliorism, in the complacency of his bourgeois ideology, in the tenacity of his devotion to Church and State—in all these things Trollope is com-

monly supposed to be thoroughly Victorian and thoroughly John Bullish. Without doubt he does represent, adequately and faithfully, a large segment of Victorian society—that powerful upper middle class group into which he was born. It was a highly vocal group, and its stentorian tones were everywhere accepted as the Voice of England. But it must not be forgotten that the ideals, convictions, and prejudices of the class for which in some measure Trollope was spokesman were not always those of the entire country. What we are tempted, and often taught, to regard as “Victorian” frequently has not the slightest relevance for the upper and lower classes. Victorianism, one must repeat, is strictly a middle-class phenomenon. But of that class Trollope is a good—may one not say a noble?—exemplar, and it is of him that I wish to treat, hoping perhaps to find in the qualities of his mind and heart some of those virtues which still bulk so large as we look back upon the period, even when obvious limitations are granted, and which have left to succeeding generations a surplus of credits and a heritage which even the most unemotional Englishman must regard pridefully.

It is a conceit of shallow men that they fully and completely understand their intimate friends. To a psychologist, however, it is a self-evident truism that we cannot know thoroughly any living person. How much less likely it is that certain fragmentary bits of evidence, picked up chiefly at second and third hand, can be reliable in assessing with any degree of surety the character of a man who has been dead three-quarters of a century. Frequently the testimony is contradictory, determined as it must be both by the prejudices of fallible men and by the deceptions, conscious and unconscious, which all men practice. At best the evidence can scarcely be better than ambiguous. At worst it is false and misleading. And it is never more than tentative, subject to revision in the light of fresh material. This being so, one hesitates to state even the strongest convictions too dogmatically.

The artist must inevitably reveal himself, however, in the totality of his work (else he is no artist), and the critic, therefore, need not pursue the whole man solely through the densities of hypothesis. Something can be established subjectively that cannot be impugned

objectively. Nevertheless, it is wise to validate and reinforce impressions by the testimony of witnesses, however biased. For Anthony Trollope we have the corpus of his enormous literary productivity and the usual cloud of deponents. Evidence of Trollope's character and personality as drawn from a close reading of his works is not always tangible and immediate, but it will perhaps make itself felt as the discussion proceeds. Evidence from eyewitnesses is not so uniform as a reader of Trollope's novels would be led to expect, and there is a challenge in sifting through the voluminous and disparate materials to discover the truth.

First of all, it may be asserted with some confidence that Anthony Trollope was a man of the fullest integrity. Whatever may have been the traits of his personality to which observers occasionally took exception, nobody ever contended that these flaws derogated in any important way from his stature as a man of the highest ideals and most spotless rectitude. Such important virtues as were indisputably his shade off into just a sufficient number of unimportant foibles to convince us of his fundamental humanity, of his kinship with those of us whose highest flights are not quite seraphic. That thousands of readers have taken Trollope to their heart may be owing to the fact that they see in him the triumph of an ordinary man, a man who without transcendent gifts yet through natural sympathies and a nice perception of values reached people whom his betters did not always touch. Dickens was often too emotional, Thackeray too satirical, George Eliot too philosophical, Meredith too witty. They sometimes make readers uncomfortable. But Trollope, unless I mistake, strikes most people as "one of ours." Here is a writer who seems to represent the apotheosis of normality. His skill, like Goldsmith's, is of the quiet sort, perhaps too subtle, too dexterous for immediate appreciation. But if the technical accomplishment is often missed by the casual reader, few have ever failed to see that through Anthony Trollope's work shine the personal and social ideals of an age. In Trollope the two are beautifully and harmoniously adjusted.

Considering for a moment Trollope's character, what impression did he make on his contemporaries? A guest entering Trollope's

drawing-room at Waltham Cross would see a man nearly six feet tall,<sup>1</sup> weighing 225 pounds. He would no doubt be struck by the ferocious dignity of the bristling black beard (which was to become snow-white in later years) and the balding pate, and the rather small but striking black eyes which peered with myopic intensity over a pair of spectacles. He would see the eager, mobile face break into a smile of recognition, and then would come the booming voice of welcome, with its implied promise of a hearty evening of good food, good wine, and good talk.

Out of the easy talk and the masculine jollity of the evening there would emerge an apparently paradoxical figure. To some observers Anthony Trollope was an essentially simple man: hearty, boisterous, contentious—a loud extrovert whose emotions were on the surface. Others saw a shy, diffident introvert working perhaps too hard to throw off a gnawing sense of inferiority, the permanent scar of a wretched boyhood. These two disparate judgments, the first arrived at by casual and superficial impressionism, the second by study and acute perception, have patterned Trollope criticism to our day. It is probably time that the chaff of vagrant inference be winnowed out and that we estimate the man in terms of considered opinions and verifiable evidence.

Those whose sensibilities were too delicate to enjoy Trollope's robust sense of decorum thought him "underbred." This was also the mistake of those to whom nature had denied either a sense of humor or the consciousness of being imposed upon. Trollope dearly loved a serious argument, but even more he loved to pull one's leg. Lowell tells a characteristic story of Trollope at the Saturday Club which aptly illustrates why he was so frequently misunderstood.

I dined the other day with Anthony Trollope, a big, red-faced, rather underbred Englishman of the bald-with-spectacles type. A good roaring positive fellow who deafened me (sitting on his right) till I thought of Dante's Cerberus. He says he goes to work on a novel 'just like a shoemaker on a shoe, only taking care to make honest stitches.' Gets up at 5 every day, does all his writing before breakfast, and always writes just so many pages a day. He and Dr. Holmes were very entertaining. The Auto-



crat started one or two hobbies, and charged, paradox in rest—but it was pelting a rhinoceros with seed-pearl.

Dr. You don't know what Madeira is in England?

T. I'm not so sure it's worth knowing.

Dr. Connoisseurship in it with us is a fine art. There are men who will tell you a dozen kinds, as Dr. Waagen would know a Carlo Dolci from a Guido.

T. They might be better employed!

Dr. Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well.

T. Ay, but that's begging the whole question. I don't admit it's *worse* doing at all. If they earn their bread by it, it may be *worse* doing (roaring).

Dr. But you may be assured—

T. No, but I mayn't be asshorred. I won't be asshorred. I don't intend to be asshorred (roaring louder)!

And so they went it. It was very funny. Trollope wouldn't give him any chance. Meanwhile, Emerson and I, who sat between them, crouched down out of range, and had some very good talk, with the shot hurtling overhead. . . . I rather liked Trollope.<sup>2</sup>

That Holmes "rather liked Trollope" too is the inference from an extant copy of *Songs in Many Keys* (1862) presented to Trollope with the author's compliments.

The fact is, of course, that Trollope was a connoisseur of wine. He built elaborate bins in his cellar, catalogued his stock, and before his death wrote his son a memorandum of instructions about its disposition. But he could not resist amusing himself by teasing both Holmes and Lowell, with whom he argued about the quality of English peaches. The two American humorists had met their match in Trollope, but they never understood who won.

Another American who failed to comprehend Trollope's humor was Clara Kellogg. Trollope never tired of shocking people by exaggerating his facility for writing to order in mechanically precise daily quotas. When he told Miss Kellogg's mother that he always chose words that would fill up the pages quickest, Miss Kellogg was driven to remark, "English people when they are not thoroughbred can be very common!"<sup>3</sup>

It should be noted that Trollope's sense of humor was very keen, though he was not particularly given to retailing set anecdotes in public. His humor was of the quiet sort, as readers of the novels might suspect, manifesting itself in subtle understatements, delicate innuendoes, and sly whimsicalities. The kind of pointed remark with which he delighted his friends came spontaneously in repartee. It may be illustrated by an incident from his first Australian tour, as reported by the *Wallaroo Times*.

It appears that at a quiet supper party the Chief Secretary, Mr. Ayres, expatiated on the merits of the neglected Colony of South Australia. 'What was there,' said he, 'that South Australia would not produce better than England? Her corn was unrivalled, her wool was famous throughout the world, so were her mines, and in process of time she was likely to be as much noted for being a wine-producing country as France.' Said the Chief Secretary, turning to Trollope, 'Can you say in what production England can excell South Australia?' 'How about Prime Ministers?' was Mr. Trollope's quiet remark, causing a roar of laughter around the table.<sup>4</sup>

Among those who were not hypersensitive to boisterous spirits and who, in addition, were perspicacious, Trollope was regarded affectionately as a sheep in wolf's clothing. Wilkie Collins wrote to William Winter: "His immeasurable energies had a bewildering effect on my invalid constitution. To me, he was an incarnate gale of wind. He blew off my hat; he turned my umbrella inside out. Joking apart, as good and staunch a friend as ever lived. . . ." <sup>5</sup> He struck Walter Sichel as outwardly a curmudgeon, inwardly the soul of good fellowship.<sup>6</sup> Sir Henry Rider Haggard, who was visited by Trollope in the Transvaal, said, "Mr. Trollope was a man who concealed a kind heart under a somewhat rough manner. . . ." <sup>7</sup> Sir Francis Burnand, who knew Trollope at the Cosmopolitan Club, thought him "a rough variation of the Tom Taylor type."<sup>8</sup> Sir Henry Taylor found him a simple, uncomplicated fellow, somewhat lacking in fine perceptions: "He is a man of direct sympathies, strong in a straightforward direction, but to whom many devious, delicate turns and subtle ways of thought and feeling are not intelligible."<sup>9</sup> No doubt Trollope showed a certain amount of pro-

tective aggressiveness in the presence of men of rank. This wore off as he came to realize that his own place was secure. Then he could be himself. George Augustus Sala gives an amusing and probably accurate picture of Trollope at one of George Smith's famous *Cornhill* dinners.

Anthony Trollope was very much to the fore, contradicting everybody; afterwards saying kind things to everybody, and occasionally going to sleep on sofas or chairs; or leaning against sideboards and even somnolent while standing erect on the hearthrug. I never knew a man who could take so many spells of 'forty winks' at unexpected moments, and then turn up quite wakeful, alert and pugnacious, as the author of 'Barchester Towers,' who had nothing of the bear but his skin, but whose ursine envelope was assuredly of the most grisly texture.<sup>10</sup>

It is significant that the bearish qualities noted by casual acquaintances did not extend to younger people. Walter Herries Pollock wrote that he never met anyone who so quickly put a young man at ease, that the shyest youngster felt quite at home with him.<sup>11</sup> Surface qualities in a man's deportment may deceive casual acquaintances as to his real character. Among those who see him daily superficial mannerisms are lost in the totality of his personality. The esteem in which Trollope was held by his intimates admits of no dispute. His son Henry was elected to the Athenaeum Club, socially and intellectually the most exclusive of London clubs, by a vote of 204 to 4, a majority unheard of in the club's history.<sup>12</sup> Since Henry Trollope had done nothing to distinguish himself, this vote is clearly a tribute to the general affection in which his father was held. To such longtime friends as Sir John Everett Millais, who knew Trollope intimately for twenty-odd years, he was simply "dear old Trollope."

The affection and respect which he won from men of discrimination and accomplishment was for Trollope a source of great satisfaction. Again and again in the *Autobiography* he confesses that a desire for personal popularity and public recognition was from the abject days of his boyhood a ruling passion of his life. It was no doubt to this end that he adopted the punishing schedule of a double

profession, realizing that in writing lay his only opportunity to rise above the social mediocrity of an obscure civil servant. As a calculated *modus vivendi* this might seem to argue a disingenuousness quite foreign to Trollope. Ambition was never an infirmity of his mind. If he sought to improve his position in the world, it was not at the expense of his integrity. He was essentially an artless person, and subterfuge was not in him. It was precisely because of his rugged honesty of character, his refusal to seem to be what he was not, that he was thought to be rather formidable. He *was* rough-hewn. The smooth deceptions of more polished men, however innocently intentioned, he never tried to learn. He was impatient with the affectations of the artistic temperament, and rejected scornfully the idea that authors should be "relieved from the necessity of paying attention to everyday rules."<sup>13</sup> Irregularities of conduct and failure to assume one's proper responsibilities were alike "odious" to him because "unmanly."

Manliness, indeed, is a key concept in his theory of values.<sup>14</sup> This cornerstone of his personal ethics is prominent in the philosophy of his heroes, who must measure up to his definition of manliness. The study of all his characters from this point of view may perhaps serve to interpret his "Victorianism." At any rate, Trollope was a man's man, his attitudes toward life being manly in the best sense. His enthusiasms and his recreations, particularly his devotion to hunting and to club life, illustrate the masculine quality of his mind. It is a paradox, though not an entirely inexplicable paradox, that the creator of so many utterly feminine young ladies should have looked at the world through such masculine spectacles. The unromantic, statistically minded rationalist of the travel books, with his passion for unadorned fact, had his melting moods. But his approach to emotion is more hesitant and tentative than direct and uncontrollable. Again, the Victorian. In life, certainly, it was men whose favor he chiefly sought, and it was the friendship of men and the praise of men that rewarded him for the countless hours of his literary labors.

Certain of Trollope's personal and social qualities, however, have recently been impugned. In their study *The Trollopes: the Chroni-*

*cle of a Writing Family* Lucy Poate Stebbins and Richard Poate Stebbins charge that Anthony Trollope was, among other things, an "indifferent father";<sup>15</sup> that he was "afraid of sex";<sup>16</sup> that he was "uncomfortable in women's society";<sup>17</sup> that he had "bad manners";<sup>18</sup> that he wrote only for money, his devotion to which was "a lifelong obsession";<sup>19</sup> that his "seldom lavish" charities were given not from kindness of heart but from the compulsions of propriety;<sup>20</sup> and that the totality of his life yielded only "disillusionment."<sup>21</sup> Since a novelist's view of life must be filtered through and colored by the subjective screen of his own personality, it is important for the proper interpretation of his philosophy and thus of his art that these accusations should be weighed on the scales of the best documented evidence. At the risk of tedium, and with no malice toward the Stebbinses, I should like to set the record straight.

That Trollope did not spend a great deal of time with his family is probably true, but it does not follow that he was an "indifferent father." His punishing routine of work, obviously pursued in the interests of the comfort and security of his family, permitted less time for group activities than he wished. But to equate Trollope's anxious concern for the welfare of his sons Henry and Frederick with Dickens's impatient dismissal of his children is seriously to misunderstand Trollope's warm and affectionate nature. Letters to Frederick, in whose interest Trollope twice circled the globe, have unfortunately disappeared; but the many letters to Henry which are extant show only the most active and most tender solicitude. There is not the slightest hint of indifference.

Was Trollope afraid of sex? The answer cannot be "yes" unless one is prepared to assert that *all* Victorians were afraid of sex. Certainly the absence from his novels of the intimate details of physical passion proves nothing whatever about Trollope, though it tells us a great deal about his readers. There is not a shred of evidence that his attitude differed one iota from that of any other respectable Victorian gentleman. Both privately and publicly he held that literature should encourage morality, and he challenged in the name of decency writers who erred in this regard.<sup>22</sup> But he vigorously protested against censorship of and editorial emendations

in his own work, and he staunchly defended Lady Wood's privilege to write like a Frenchman if she chose. George Henry Lewes and George Eliot, deserted by many of the unco guid, had no more affectionate admirer than Anthony Trollope. If this is not evidence that Trollope's attitude toward sex was not hesitant and timorous, it is at least more objective than anything which his accusers have cited to traduce his normality. The charge that he disliked women, that he felt diffident and embarrassed in their presence, seems to be based on the fact that he was devoted to manly sports and recreations. At any rate, there is no other evidence. It seems hardly necessary to remark that if one is looking for misogynists, the hunting field is one of the least likely places to begin. Furthermore, there is no convincing record that any woman ever complained that Anthony Trollope was either uncomfortable or ungallant in her presence.

The charge of bad manners cannot so easily be broken down. Trollope was often irritable, frequently contentious, and always loud. Family legends have established the fact of his irritability, but it is not easy to see in what category of frustration or maladjustment he should be placed. A faithful study of his letters reveals no unfulfilled ambition, no withered friendship, no cankered idealism. He resented the tardiness of his promotion at the Post Office, but there was no perceptible change in his character after his resignation. The readiest and perhaps soundest explanation of his reputation as an *enfant terrible* is that he dearly loved an argument over the whist table or in the Athenaeum library. The give-and-take of dialectics in defense of one's prejudices he found exhilarating, but he scarcely cared on what side of a question chance threw him. Some observers did not see that his fondness for argument arose not from the vanity of sour opposition, but from pleasure in the cultivation of intellectual agility. Whatever the subject, whatever the company, Trollope made himself heard. Mrs. Reginald Smith, the daughter of George Smith, recalled for me in 1947 how from the bottom of the stairs Trollope's powerful voice announced his arrival at her father's dinners. She and her sister often incurred parental wrath by imitating Trollope's stentorian tones. If Trollope could

not win his case by sound argument, he sometimes resorted to shouting his opponent down. He might have been more generally popular had he played his instrument pianissimo, but he chose to pull out all the stops and greet Everyman with a hearty blast of forthright but not always well-considered opinion. The extra run up and down the keyboard which he could not resist usually produced a bit of dissonant hyperbole. It is no new theory, but it may be further emphasized, that whatever there was in his manner of compulsive exhibitionism was the defense of a very sensitive spirit not quite at home in a society from which it had long been excluded. Readers of Trollope's *Autobiography* are well aware that the scars of his lean youth were deep, that he worked tirelessly as an adult for the wealth and position that could alone heal the wounds of a miserable boyhood. He won his battle, but he never learned to move in cultivated circles with the ease of his less imaginative but more socially sophisticated brother Tom. Anthony's "bad manners" were no more than an awkward attempt to cover up his inexperience.

But he who charges Trollope with having written only for money so badly misunderstands the man as virtually to invalidate any other statement he may make. Trollope wrote for the same reason that any other first-rate novelist has written: because he enjoyed it. Authors make a practice of calling for sympathy on the ground that they must undergo the tortures of composition, but the skillful persist because of the enduring satisfactions of the creative effort. That is not to say that making a comfortable living is not an important stimulant. The *Autobiography* leaves no doubt about Trollope's commercial instincts and purposes, though in equating himself with the shoemaker he is characteristically self-depreciatory. Such pervasive humility is so rare among the gifted that unwary critics have been trapped into thinking him a mechanical and opportunistic hack. A more accurate explanation of Trollope's devotion to his craft is to be found in excerpts from his correspondence. He wrote to his brother-in-law John Tilley, advising against early retirement from business: "You say of me;—that I would not choose to write novels unless I were paid. Most certainly I would;—much rather than not write them at all." <sup>23</sup> To his son Henry he wrote: "As long as I can

write books, even though they be not published, I think that I can be happy." <sup>24</sup> To Alfred Austin he wrote: "I cannot believe the Old Testament because labour is spoken of as the *evil* consequence of the Fall of Man. My only doubt as to finding a heaven for myself at last arises from the fear that the disembodied and beatified spirits will not want novels." <sup>25</sup> From the foregoing statements it is a simple deduction that writing, not money, was the passion of Trollope's life.

Concerning Trollope's charities little has been known, for he did not choose to publicize his generosity. But even Edmund Yates, who did not like him, could think of no one "more heartily, more thoroughly, more unselfishly charitable." Mr. Sadleir has noted the delicacy with which Trollope told the story of Thackeray and the £2000 loan to W. F. Synge. Trollope did not mention the fact that it was he who put up half the sum. The anonymous reviewer of Trollope's *Autobiography* in *The World*, who was no doubt aware of facts which are hidden from us, declared: "There was no man of his time who performed such substantial and even gratuitous acts of kindness to his friends. Not one of these is mentioned by him in these records." <sup>26</sup> Trollope's recent critics are right to this extent, that, as newly published letters to Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Austin show, Trollope thought philanthropy a moral and ethical mistake, a sorry expedient in a wretched world. But like Emerson, who shared this conviction, Trollope could not withhold the alms. Indeed, he worked tirelessly for years as an officer of the Royal Literary Fund, an organization which aids impoverished authors. In the total absence of any evidence that Trollope shirked the obligations of responsible citizenship, it is surely best to accept these activities and these testimonials as warrants of his enlightened charities.

The fruit of Trollope's life, it is said, was "disillusionment." It is difficult to document this assertion; at any rate the Stebbinses scarcely make the attempt. No doubt, most readers will call for more substantial evidence than the fact that *The Way We Live Now* attacks the shams and dishonesties of certain social and business types. Yet the Stebbinses content themselves chiefly with the statement that "In the early 1870's Anthony Trollope suffered a gradual



disillusionment. . . ."<sup>27</sup> It is perfectly true that Trollope was not notably sanguine in his declining years, but it does not follow that the fruit had turned to ashes in his mouth. Had he experienced any profound disillusionment his family and close friends must have remarked a significant change. No such change was ever noted.

It is true, however, that some of the joy went out of Trollope's life in his last decade. He had resigned from the Post Office in 1867, but had immediately plunged into his editorial labors for the *Saint Pauls Magazine*. Three years later, however, the journal failed, leaving the busiest man of his age without adequate stimulation for his powers. He did not know how to relax, and he chafed at enforced inactivity. Authorship alone could not claim the full time of such a facile writer. In desperation he resumed his globe-trotting, but the feet of the work horse do not always at once accommodate themselves to the meadow. There is sometimes a yearning for busier streets, for the chance to die in harness. The somberness that the Stebbinses see was not disillusionment growing out of a frustrated idealism, but rather the human reaction to the bitter hour when unexpended energies face at last both the decline of opportunities and the tapering off of the creative force.

The coronation of Elizabeth II, with its attendant pageantry, renewed in English hearts a pride in the national character, and no doubt quickened the sense of history in all men. But few could have failed to note the painful contrast of the doubts and misgivings of the era of the present Queen with the buoyant optimism of the reign of the last Queen. We are inclined, perhaps, to deprecate some aspects of that optimism as ill-founded and superficial; but unless we wish to join those who think "God's in his heaven; all's right with the world" is a fair statement of nineteenth-century philosophy, we will not condemn Victorian optimism without a rigorous definition and a study of its implications.

I am not sure that many Victorians, strictly speaking, *were* optimists. Philosophical optimism, if I understand the term, is a view of life which holds that the condition of things is good, and that happiness is the aim and end of humanity. I do not find that many

educated Victorians were attracted to this interpretation of life. Even less were they attracted to philosophical pessimism, which holds that the condition of things is bad, that man is to be redeemed from the evil of existence by meditative intuition and suffering. I feel certain that what we have long called Victorian optimism is in fact a species of meliorism, a doctrine intermediate between optimism and pessimism. Now, meliorism accepts the premise of pessimism that there is a great deal of evil in the world, but it contends that this evil may be lessened by the exercise of intelligence. It contends further that life for itself is without value, that its worth is the sum of labor performed in the aspiration after progress. Since the ethical ideal of meliorism, therefore, is work, the purpose of life and the duty of man, as the philosopher Paul Carus has pointed out, is activity and labor in the service of amelioration. Unless I am mistaken, this is no bad statement of Victorian optimism. It is certainly a good statement of the social and political philosophy of Anthony Trollope.

The obstacles which Trollope met while trying to establish himself among his fellows served materially to widen his horizons and to encourage a social meliorism. He was fortunate in being born into the middle class, for from no other perspective could he have viewed so objectively the privileges of wealth and the miseries of poverty. His father, though badly frustrated by the failure of his expectations and his ambitions, was a man of great erudition. His mother was a woman of spirit and imagination who brought into the family circle Mary Russell Mitford, Laetitia E. Landon, and the Milmans. She had been entertained by Lafayette before the days of her fame, and she was to know most of the important public figures of the age. But she had experienced great financial distress, from which Anthony, the youngest boy, apparently suffered most. At any rate, the humiliation of his status as a charity boy at Harrow and of a sheriff's seizure of the family property etched itself deeply into his moral consciousness and perhaps provided that touch of nature which made him kin to the dispossessed everywhere. He was not a "humanitarian" novelist, and those who have misunderstood his purposes have sometimes denied him a social conscience; but it

was with the keenest appreciation that he followed every attempt to draw attention to and ultimately to improve the economic lot of the world's unfortunate.

That Song of the Shirt, which I regard as poetry of the immortal kind, has done an amount of good infinitely wider than poor Hood ever ventured to hope. Of all such efforts I would speak not only with respect, but with loving admiration.<sup>28</sup>

Though he wanted to narrow the gap between the social and economic extremes, Trollope was not an equalitarian. The novels are shot through with authorial digressions which make his position clear, and there is a full statement of the matter in the *Autobiography*. Briefly, Trollope held that the patent inequalities among men, painful to observe as they certainly are, have been ordained by God, whose wisdom we are powerless to fathom. Some persons in an understandable but wrong-headed desire to set right the world's dislocated joints proclaim the equality of all men. Others, conscientious philanthropic Conservatives, feeling that it is unwise to tamper with the divine order, seek to preserve the established social ranks and distances. Still others, the Liberals, attempt to avoid the errors of the two extremists. While acknowledging the divine sanction of inequality, they work confidently toward its diminution. They do not advocate equality, for that is the way "of communism, of ruin, and insane democracy,"<sup>29</sup> but they recognize and support a tendency toward equality. This middle ground of political philosophy is beautifully dramatized as the Duke of Omnium's creed in chapter xlviii of *The Prime Minister*.<sup>30</sup> In adopting it Trollope thought of himself as an "advanced Conservative-Liberal."

It might be pertinent to quote here from a letter of Trollope's which has recently been brought to my attention.<sup>31</sup> R. Dudley Baxter published in 1870 a pamphlet on "English Parties and Conservatism." In a letter of thanks to Baxter for the copy that had been sent him Trollope attempted to analyze the social philosophy of the two great parties.

. . . I differ from you somewhat not only in politics generally, but in your definition of parties. To my idea, the great difference between Conserva-

tives and Liberals (and I take these two names as the best I know to mark the two great political parties of the time) consists in this, that the Liberals think it to be for the welfare of the people and the good of the country that distances should be reduced and gradually annihilated. The Conservative thinks it to be for the good of each that he should maintain the great "distance" or degree of difference which divides the Duke from the labourer, while the Liberal conceives that the more that difference is contracted the better it will be for both parties. In venturing on this definition, I ascribe no inferior motives or superior patriotism to one than to the other. But, as I think, such has been the difference of ideas on this great subject since men divided themselves into parties. It was as plainly marked in the days of Caesar and Pompey as it is now; as plain indeed in the earlier days of the Greek republics; as plainly, probably, if we knew the facts, among still earlier ages. And it seems to me that the one party is almost as necessary as the other. Accumulating wealth will recreate the distances almost as fast as they are dissolved by popular energy. . . .

It should be remembered that Trollope held the amelioration of social conditions to be the chief end of government. Any man who advocates a political doctrine, except as a means of improving the condition of his fellows, is "a political intriguer, a charlatan, and a conjuror."<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, this goal is not to be obtained by levelling. Trollope would not relinquish his faith in an enlightened aristocracy as the bastion of a sound social system. He liked the society of the wellborn and the wealthy, and he was honest enough to say so. But he liked such people because among them were to be found the highest percentage of the educated and the cultured. The way must be left open, of course, for men to achieve distinction by native talents alone, and they will be the more highly honored for the difficulties they have overcome. Yet it should be clear, even to a Daniel Thwaite, that "from the ranks of the nobility are taken the greater proportion of the hard-working servants of the state."<sup>33</sup> Trollope consistently opposed competitive examinations in the Civil Service because he felt that a man of moderate ability who was a gentleman would render more satisfactory service to the state than a man of greater ability who was not a gentleman.<sup>34</sup> The crucial problem of defining "gentleman," however, he admitted to be unsolvable. In

social matters he would have agreed, no doubt, with his friend Oliver Wendell Holmes, who said, "I go politically for equality—socially for *the* quality."<sup>35</sup> Phineas Finn probably spoke for his creator when he remarked that "The Dukes have more to offer than the Joneses."<sup>36</sup>

If these observations seem to the modern reader rather chilling in their apparent narrowness and intolerance, it must be remembered that they fairly represent the paternalistic meliorism of educated, class-conscious Victorians. Trollope was not quite so crass as to believe with his Roger Carbury that a society in which "the poor people touch their hats, and the rich people think of the poor"<sup>37</sup> is the *summum bonum* of human relations. He did believe, however, in English society as the best the world had known; and he contended that the rich, in regarding their property as a public trust, had had much to do with giving that society its benevolent characteristics.<sup>38</sup>

In *Rachel Ray* Trollope sets forth the creed of a radical (his own creed, of course), pointing out that "a radical is not necessarily a revolutionist or even a republican."<sup>39</sup> His nonconformity rests in his belief in the idea of progress and in his refusal to own the inferiority of his manhood to that of any other person. He does not grudge the rights which are proper to the earl, but he does not permit the earl to invade *his* rights. In the *Autobiography* Trollope develops at some length his concept of progress, rejecting the pessimism of Carlyle and Ruskin in favor of the meliorism of a maturing society. The lamentations of Carlyle and Ruskin "over a world which is supposed to have gone altogether shoddywards, are . . . contrary to the convictions of men who cannot but see how comfort has been increased, how health has been improved, and education extended. . . ." <sup>40</sup> These statements, in sum, illustrate the limitations of Trollope's republicanism and make clear to what extent he submitted to the Victorian social and political compromise. If he would not go all the way with Mr. Foster, Peacock's perfectibilian, he certainly set out in a different direction from that of Mr. Escot, the deteriorationist.

The meliorist, like the perfectibilian, confident of the future, ac-

knowledges the shortcomings of the present. Trollope was vigorously aware of social and political abuses in England. In *North America* (1862) he had contrasted British education very unfavorably with American. In *The Way We Live Now* (1875) he had mounted a blistering attack on "the commercial profligacy of the age." But it was in *The American Senator* (1877) that he unleashed his heaviest guns against British institutions. Elias Gotobed, the American Senator, is pompous and tactless, but he is a man of honesty and intelligence. It may be observed that in his arguments with his hosts his criticisms are often unanswerable. He makes sport of the anachronism of a powerless monarchy, satirizes the complacency of an hereditary legislature, notes acidly the injustices of primogeniture, puts his finger on the inequalities arising from church patronage, and makes himself generally obnoxious by embarrassing inquiries for which no rational answer can be found. As early as *The Warden* Trollope was writing about ecclesiastical sinecures; eleven years later he was still fulminating in the public press about this abuse. As early as *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* and as late as *The Landleaguers*, the alpha and omega of his literary career, he was distressed by the Irish peasants' melancholy struggle for subsistence. He had a philosophical confidence that the world was getting to be a better place in which to live and that England was the place where further improvement might soonest be expected; but when he looked at particular institutions around him, he saw much that made him unhappy. As eagerly as any man he wished to see righted those wrongs by which social idealism is frustrated. Correction must not come precipitantly, but gradually. This is the conservative way—the English way. Trollope put the matter succinctly in *Barchester Towers*: "Till we can become divine we must be content to be human, lest in our hurry for a change we sink to something lower."<sup>41</sup>

Because of his meliorism and his sturdy faith in British institutions Trollope has often been accepted as a convenient symbol of one of the more obvious characteristics of Victorianism. In a period of tremendous domestic and colonial expansion it is not extraordinary that nationalism should put down deep roots. Nor is it surprising

under these circumstances that even the most thoughtful observers of the international scene should come to identify local prosperity with a moral and cultural superiority. That Trollope rose above these complacent convictions at all times is not to be maintained. He was occasionally guilty of "frantic boast and foolish word." In rejecting with some acerbity the warnings of Carlyle and Ruskin, who, he thought, offered only a dyspeptic counsel of woe, Trollope showed how much of the dominant economic and political *laissez faire* of the age he had swallowed. He never hesitated to declare his belief that British civilization in the nineteenth century was the highest that the world had known. Carlyle and Henry Adams to the contrary, he may have been right, at least in part. I should not like to undertake the proof that he was entirely wrong. But he was shortsighted in his view of England as the chief repository of the major virtues in perpetuity. To Kate Field he wrote that he held it "higher to be a bad Englishman . . . than a good American."<sup>42</sup> Though this remark was made lightly, and though he added, "If that makes you angry, see if you would not say the reverse of yourself," it does not greatly exaggerate his position. America represented the wave of the future, as he shrewdly saw,<sup>43</sup> but it was a wave that would never wash over Dover's cliffs. Such was Trollope's nationalism.

But Trollope was also an internationalist, who in his concept of a maturing social order exhibits a universal philanthropy which I interpret as essentially melioristic. Yet a few critics, emphasizing the dogmatism of some of his local prejudices, have been led into the error of denying him *any* cosmopolitan understanding. The Stebbinses, for example, say that "he remained an insular Englishman whose early sympathies and antipathies were unmodified by reason or by observation."<sup>44</sup> Professor John Hazard Wildman speaks of him as "incurably provincial."<sup>45</sup> Such statements cannot be allowed to pass unchallenged, for they do serious injury to the reputation of a man who, however strong were his affections for his homeland and his countrymen, was broad enough to declare, "There is much that is higher & better & greater than one's country. One is patriotic only because one is too small & too weak to be cosmopolitan."<sup>46</sup> I

have a very sure feeling that this man who took European travel for granted, who twice sailed around the world, who visited the United States five times, and who penetrated into the remotest areas of Australia and South Africa, was something more than "insular." Those who think Trollope provincial must show that he developed a petty and irrational dislike of foreign countries, that he was unsympathetic with the people of the colonies he visited and failed to comprehend their problems, and that he thought the English way of life was scarcely vulnerable to criticism or susceptible of improvement. This cannot be shown. In fact, very nearly the opposite is true. Those who have not read the last chapter of *North America*, with its affectionate and sentimental farewell to Boston and to the United States, will not, of course, know the depth and sincerity of Trollope's love for America. Those who have not read the opening chapter of *Australia and New Zealand*, for example, may die in the belief that Trollope was a Victorian imperialist. Those who have not read the introduction to *South Africa* or a number of other pertinent texts may think of Trollope as an unenlightened advocate of white supremacy.

I cannot think that readers who have informed themselves fully will contend that Trollope's "early sympathies and antipathies were unmodified by reason or by observation." I should say, rather, that the tireless traveler became something of an internationalist. Out of the depth of his experiences on many continents and among varied peoples came one of the noblest definitions of patriotism that literature affords; "Patriotism is the virtue of a limited & confined sympathy."<sup>47</sup> I must confess that I do not see how the man who thought that cosmopolitanism is the grandest condition of the human mind can be arraigned as "incurably provincial." In his active benevolence Trollope posited a world in which patriotism is "the last refuge of a scoundrel."<sup>48</sup> But from his hard-won knowledge of human frailty he saw that "you may preach for ever without being able to teach men that they should love all the world as well as their own country."<sup>49</sup> He who resists local pride in the interests of a universal philanthropy is the citizen of the world. Such was Trollope's internationalism.



## 2 CATHEDRAL AND PARISH ❧

THE VICTORIAN novelist did not take himself very seriously. Since he wrote for a disparate, heterogeneous group and aimed primarily at amusement, he did not often assume the mantle of the poet or the prophet. And he was not a self-conscious technician. This is at once his merit and his defect. He is easy, relaxed, chatty. He had few rules and few illusions about his importance, for he was not taught to regard his profession as one of the arts. Several generations of readers, however, have found his spontaneity delightful, his ingenuousness charming, and his freedom from messianic poses restful. Nevertheless, his cavalier attitude toward his work is disquieting. It is not necessary, perhaps, to have a Jamesian dedication to one's craft, but some measure of artistic integrity would seem to be required to sustain a conviction of reality. Furthermore, the Victorian novelist, in rarely concerning himself with ideas, forfeits much of the appeal which we now expect fiction to make. This is not to assert that the nineteenth-century novelist worked in an intellectual vacuum. Dickens, Disraeli, Reade, Kingsley, Collins, Mrs. Gaskell, and others, as everyone knows, were vitally interested in current social problems and found in them useful story material. Nor is it to assert that the appeal of these writers must necessarily be to the intellectually incurious and aesthetically obtuse. It is a happy characteristic of at least the best Victorian fiction that it is read for relaxation, and perhaps even for stimulation, by persons whose literary taste is not open to dispute. Nevertheless, these writers begin and end with other purposes than the discussion or the

illustration of ideas. Even with George Eliot the story line takes precedence over the moral or philosophical argument. Trollope rarely attempts more than the comedy of manners.

The question may therefore be asked why one should examine the interests and opinions of a writer in whose work ideas do not figure importantly. The answer lies perhaps in two considerations. First, Dr. Johnson is not alone in preferring the biographical part of literature. We are all interested in a mind out of which truth and beauty has been distilled. A man who has created an enduring work of art forfeits the luxury of anonymity. Most of us are intensely curious to see how our own experience of the world squares with that of the gifted man. We want to learn how typical are the lights and shadows of our own lives, hoping to find that the values we have pursued seem worth while to men of accomplishment. Second, it is important that we be able to distinguish between authorial opinion and dramatic characterization. One needs very little knowledge of Tennyson to show that "Locksley Hall" is not an accurate summary of his philosophy. But to distinguish the opinions of Penderennis from those of William Makepeace Thackeray demands a much closer and more subtle study.

In one sense, of course, an author is always writing his autobiography, for he can know only what he has observed of the world. Sometimes, like Thackeray, he makes little pretense of disguising his material, developing his narrative from the point of view of a character readily identifiable as the author himself. More often, perhaps, he will attempt to sublimate himself in a dramatic conception of his experience, expressing ideas and opinions which are not his but which are germane to the character types and to the expanding situations involved. If he occasionally breaks through this dramatic convention either to identify himself temporarily with a character or to step forward and deliver a bold comment on the action in his own person as author, he illustrates the loose narrative technique which Trollope found attractive. It is therefore difficult to ascertain when Trollope is developing a character and when he is expressing his own views. In the analysis of a novelist's methods, and in the study of his mind, it is important to avoid fastening upon

him statements for which he would disclaim all responsibility. One must therefore chart Trollope's position at various points on the seven seas of intellectual inquiry.

No one ever claimed for Trollope a subtle mind. He cared little for abstractions. The principles of logic did not trouble him, and he left syllogistic thinking to the philosophers. Few first-rate writers have been less intellectualistic. But Trollope had an inquisitive mind, and his interests were very broad—perhaps too broad. He had opinions on everything, but he was concerned chiefly with how people live. Quite properly, the novelist doubled as sociologist, studying man in his social relationships. Trollope's education was spotty, but few men were better informed in so wide a variety of topics. Virtually everything that concerned a Victorian Englishman concerned him. From his novels, his nonfictional prose, and his letters one can cull opinions, often pungently expressed, that serve to interpret and explain the many-faceted age.

### *Trollope and Religion*

Since Trollope is known principally as a creator of clerical types and cathedral towns, it is appropriate to examine his views on religion and the church. The Stebbinses call the penultimate chapter of their book "The Passing of a Demi-Pagan." Though virtually no attempt is made to substantiate this title or, indeed, to relate it to the text, the implications of the phrase are very damaging to Trollope's reputation as a man of orthodox and sincere religious sentiments. I do not find evidence to show that he was other than a staunch member of the Church of England who took his spiritual duties and responsibilities with proper but not unseemly seriousness. He had a very active concern for the integrity of his church, which he found to be liable to error. However divine it might have been in its origin, it is now carried on by fallible agencies and is thus susceptible to such abuses as other human institutions must suffer. Trollope was intolerant of the imperfections of the one system which he found spiritually satisfying, but he was notably tolerant of the

beliefs of others who were following a different path toward the same goal. He was a liberal to the extent that virtually all other educated Victorians were liberal; that is, his theology kept pace with the discoveries of the new science, which he welcomed, seeing at once that there is no conflict between the core of religion and man's knowledge of the operation of natural laws.<sup>1</sup>

The author of *The Warden* once denied that he had any special knowledge of clergymen. This is perhaps true, in part, for he seems to have had no further opportunities to observe them than are available to any other interested layman. Yet his *Clergymen of the Church of England* indicates that from the only vantage point available to him, that of an outsider, he had subjected the church as an organization to a rather searching analysis. Questions of dogma he always avoided, and in the novels he normally contented himself with careful observation of the externals of clerical deportment. In the *Autobiography* he discusses neither his religious experiences nor his philosophy of the use of spiritual matters for artistic purposes. But several explicit statements in the novels make it perfectly clear that the clergymen of his fiction are intended to represent only the social manifestations of the sacred profession.<sup>2</sup> Trollope might take us into the Archdeacon's bedchamber, but not into the council chamber of the church. He knew precisely the shallowness of the Archdeacon as a man, but he never attempted to guess the depth of the spiritual reservoirs from which the Archdeacon drew his strength as an interpreter of God's will. Trollope had learned the first letter of the novelist's A B C's: write only of what you know.

Though Trollope steadfastly refused to enter into any theological controversy centering around a statement of faith, he never hesitated to oppose clerical practices which he considered abusive of fundamental principles and privileges. Two favorite targets of his attacks, early and late, were gross inequalities in clerical stipends and abuses in connection with the purchase of livings. *The Warden* calls upon the church to justify the continuation of sinecure offices carrying large salaries. Trollope shrewdly emphasizes the iniquity of the situation by placing Hiram's Hospital under the nominal direction

not of a worldly hypocrite but of a kindly and devoted servant of the church who is profoundly shocked that he should be thought guilty of any impropriety. The point is, of course, that a pernicious system had been operating so long that even the most scrupulously honest did not question the ethics of its establishment. While the warden takes his ease, busy Mr. Quiverful, vicar of Puddingdale, must reject the insistent and legitimate demands of his alarmingly large family for the elementary comforts of life. Trollope is wise enough to play up the humor which some of these scenes suggest, but there is convincing evidence that the animating idea was neither casually conceived nor lightly held. In 1866 Trollope returned to the subject with an article for the *Pall Mall Gazette* on "Curate's Incomes."<sup>3</sup> This was in reality a defense of some remarks in his *Clergymen of the Church of England*, which had been attacked by *The Guardian*.<sup>4</sup> Trollope had asserted that the normal stipend of the rural curate was £70 per annum, adding that curates were doing 75 per cent of the parish work for 25 per cent of the available income. This *The Guardian* wrathfully denied. On July 18, however, they published a letter from the Reverend J. Altham, a rural curate who declared that his situation was precisely that which Trollope had described (p. 748).<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, Trollope was hard at work on *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, in which Josiah Crawley, perpetual curate of Hogglestock, is just such an impoverished clergyman as had recently been under discussion. The novel, the clerical sketches, and the article are pieces of various lengths cut from the same cloth. Trollope achieved in Crawley his one unquestioned triumph of characterization primarily because he felt so keenly the shameful injustice of the rural curate's position and because he was able to give his sympathies an imaginative form.

It is clear, then, that Trollope regarded the prevailing system of distributing parochial incomes as a disagreeable anachronism calling for immediate adjustment. Dr. Vesey Stanhope in *Barchester Towers* is a symbol of the dry rot that will affect a church establishment which supports the absentee vicar. In *Framley Parsonage* Trollope discusses the inevitable harvest of such seeds: "In other trades, professions, and lines of life, men are paid according to their work.

Let it be so in the church. Such will sooner or later be the edict of a utilitarian, reforming, matter-of-fact House of Parliament." <sup>6</sup> But the fullest exposition of Trollope's point of view is to be found in *The American Senator*. At Mr. Mainwaring's little dinner (chap. xlii) Elias Gotobed probes some of the sorest spots on the body ecclesiastic. He makes a number of home thrusts—to the evident discomfiture of the rector and his guests, who are reduced to speechless rage by what they regard as the Senator's boorishness. Some recent critics seem to agree with Mr. Mainwaring that the Senator was a "brute." <sup>7</sup> But it should be observed that Gotobed's two chief contentions (that there are terrible inequalities in salary, and that livings can be bought and sold) are also Trollope's contentions—and they are unanswerable, or at least were unanswered by the company that evening, Mr. Mainwaring laboring in rebuttal under the heavy handicap that his own living had been bought for him by his wife's money!

Such were the chinks in the armor of the church to which Trollope was devoted. It was a strong church and did not fear friendly attack. But it was also a wise church and would look to its weaknesses. The measures which Trollope urged were constructively designed to reinforce the areas which had become vulnerable through inactivity and progressive decay. Trollope was a critic of the church in the same sense that Hardy was a pessimist about the world: he did not blink its imperfections, loving it well enough to draw it faithfully.

Trollope's attitude toward religious groups outside his own church has considerable interest, for it frequently impinges on his practice as a novelist. Toward Roman Catholics he evinced not merely respect but affection. In his youth, as Escott points out, he had become acquainted with F. W. Faber and John Henry Newman, for both of whom he had a high regard. <sup>8</sup> In his Irish years he came to know priests and parishioners not as an outsider but as a native may know them. He was quick to see that the anti-Catholic prejudices of the Evangelical churches were narrow and bigoted, based on scanty information and a perversion of fact. The priesthood he treated with unfailing respect. *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* and

*The Kellys and the O'Kellys*, his first two novels, reflect sympathy with and understanding of a religion quite foreign to his own training. His third novel, *La Vendée*, is an eloquent tribute to the fervent sincerity and intense spirituality of French Catholicism. Trollope never lost his interest in the Irish church, turning his attention several times in periodical essays to the somewhat anomalous religious situation in that country.<sup>9</sup> And on a number of occasions in his novels he took the opportunity to commend, at least by implication, the tolerance of Catholics and to urge it upon other groups.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, he noted a prevailing obstinacy of opinion among the Catholic priesthood; observing of M. le Curé Gondin in *The Golden Lion* that he had "that strong dislike to yield an inch in practice or in doctrine which is indicative of his order" (p. 220). Certain individual priests, too, abused their privileges as holy men and otherwise displayed such regrettable traits of character that Trollope was forced to withdraw his friendship. Mary Holmes, an ardent Roman Catholic and Trollope's most devoted correspondent on literary matters, took exception to the priest in *The Way We Live Now*. Trollope's reply deserves to be quoted at some length.

I must say a word touching my priest in *W. W. Live Now*. In the first place he is a thoroughly good man, anxiously doing his duty according to his lights, at any cost of personal suffering,—one of whom one might confidently say that he was on the road to heaven. If so, you can hardly say that, in describing such a man, I am hard on the order. Then, let me, (—if I may do so without arrogance,)—refer you to a novel of my own which you yourself name in your letter, 'The Macdermots', and say that in the character of Father John there I have drawn as thoroughly good and fine a man as I know how to depict. Then going back to the priest in the later novel, let me say that, when at Waltham, I became acquainted with the R. C. priest there, & opened my house to him in full friendship. He was a thoroughly conscientious man, an Oxford man, what we call a pervert and you a convert, and a perfect gentleman,—so poor that he had not bread to eat. I & my wife were as good to him as we knew how to be;—but he would never desist for a moment from casting ridicule and opprobrium on my religion, though I would not on any account have hinted a slur upon his. I was obliged to drop him. He made himself absolutely unbearable.

I have lived much with clergymen of your church, & have endeavoured to draw them in their colours as I saw them. But, because they were the priests of a church which was not my church, I have never drawn one as bad, or hypocritical, or unfaithful.<sup>11</sup>

Trollope's attitude toward Jews is not so clearly marked. In the novels he makes less use of the Jew than of the Roman Catholic, principally, one judges, because his contacts with the former were not broad. Of course, he introduces the Jew conventionally as a usurer; and since so many of his plots turn upon or at least involve a "bit of paper," the usurer is a familiar type in the novels. In the bitter days of his junior clerkship Trollope had become wearisomely acquainted with the discounter of bills, and it was no doubt difficult for him to think of the Jew in any other connection. Nevertheless, it is instructive of his broadness in matters of race and religion to examine *Nina Balatka*, a novel given an unfamiliar setting among the Jewish colony of Prague. The Victorian pattern of fiction provided, in general, for two Jewish characterizations—both stereotypes: the ogre, such as Fagin of *Oliver Twist*; and the demigod, such as Riah of *Our Mutual Friend*. Whatever function these characters might have in a morality play, they are unsuccessful in a realistic novel, for each represents an extreme of aberrant human conduct. The use of these types, unless obviously for allegorical purposes, argues on the part of the novelist either a willful perversion of human nature or a fundamental failure to understand it. In *Nina Balatka* Trollope does not entirely avoid the stereotype, for Rebecca Loth is something of a demigoddess; but the Trendellsohns are carefully individualized and very human. Stephen, the father, is an idealist, but he has not conquered all his prejudices. Anton, the son, a remarkably acute study in racial history, rises above the ghetto environment of his youth. In a more ambitious and infinitely more difficult psychological portrait than he usually attempted, Trollope develops in Anton the disabling experiences of ghetto segregation and persecution. Anton has a number of regrettable character traits: he is stubborn, haughty, suspicious; but he is honest, sincere, and honorable. In him Trollope traces the disintegration of European ghetto society and the emergence of a more self-reliant Jewish



individualist who can escape environmental neuroses. Where Fagin and Riah are copybook studies in black and white and appeal to the critically naive, Anton is delicately drawn in subtle gray shadings more likely to appeal to the critically mature. Whether or not Trollope's handling of Jewish scenes and characters indicates any affection for the group, it is pretty clear that he could use Jews objectively for artistic purposes, seeing in them the same mixed qualities of mind and heart that animated the Anglicans of Barchester.

Trollope shows no such tolerance toward the Evangelical faiths. By training and by natural preference he was a latitudinarian, distressed by the petrified fundamentalism of various Low Church sects. Escott has pointed out the family prejudice against evangelicism, as seen particularly in the *Vicar of Wrexhill*, in which Mrs. Trollope pilloried "Velvet" Cunningham as a dealer in moral and theological humbug of a highly dogmatic order. Trollope could be dogmatic himself; it was he, after all, who laid down the law at the founding of the *Fortnightly Review* that no contributor to that journal should be permitted to question the divinity of Christ. But his dogmatism did not extend to matters of ritual. He had the deepest respect for genuine piety, and was aware that it might assume some innocent oddity of form. This was inconsequential. More serious, however, were two evangelical assumptions: first, that the religious life can develop only from a mystical conversion, that good works cannot be performed by those who are not in a state of grace; and second, that the religious life entails conformity to an ethical code that seemed to him preposterously narrow. Escott reports Trollope's expostulation to an evangelical monitor: "You tell me that, in effect, virtue becomes vice if its practical pursuit be not sanctified by a mystical motive not within the understanding of all. Such a theory, I retort, can in its working have only one of two results—the immorality of antinomianism, or a condition of perplexity and confusion which must drive men from religion in disgust and despair."<sup>12</sup> Trollope does not mention the Society for Promoting Due Observance of the Lord's Day, but his essay on "The Fourth Commandment"<sup>13</sup> is a corrosive analysis of Low Church Sabbatarianism, an

offense against reason toward which, it will be remembered, both Mr. Slope and Mrs. Proudie had strong leanings. The familiar story of Trollope, Norman Macleod, and the publication of *Rachel Ray* need not be retold here. It will be sufficient to emphasize the bitterness of Trollope's attack in the novel on Mr. Prong, Mrs. Prime, and other evangelical pietists. Antipathies nursed for many years broke out, and Trollope did not choose to temper resentment with mercy. He detested the assumed omniscience of these people as he detested their fugitive and cloistered virtues. The smugness, the air of moral superiority with which they drenched their little platitudes of pulpit wisdom drove him into unwonted exaggeration and Dickensian caricature. In *Miss Mackenzie* he repeats the pattern, though it is not so prominently displayed, with Mrs. Stumfold and the evangelical society of Littlebath. And in *The Vicar of Bullhampton* Mr. Puddleham and his Primitive Methodists provide a further satirical sketch.

It is perhaps clear that Trollope's concern with clerical matters amounted almost to a preoccupation. Sham, humbug, and other varieties of religious insincerity he combatted with all his power. Knowing the frailties of men, he studied the weaknesses of ecclesiastical organizations with tireless vigilance. He was concerned lest human error should discredit religion itself. I do not know that such a man can be described as a demi-pagan. Whatever reservations he might have had about the wisdom of hierarchical practices and the preservation of "picturesque absurdities," he was no skeptic of the basic tenets of the Church of England. Quite the reverse, in fact. George Henry Lewes noted in his diary for June 4, 1866, a dinner party attended, among others, by Trollope and Alexander Bain: "Bain startled us by his anti-Christian onslaught and Trollope amused us by his defence."<sup>14</sup> No doubt Trollope maintained his position with his well-known doggedness. I think he did so with complete sincerity.

In the penultimate paragraph of *The Last Chronicle of Barset* there is a passage in which Trollope, surveying the long Barsetshire series from the vantage point of its conclusion, comments on the way in which he has conceived and developed his clerical characters.

I have described many clergymen, they say, but have spoken of them all as though their professional duties, their high calling, their daily workings for the good of those around them, were matters of no moment, either to me, or in my opinion, to themselves. I would plead, in answer to this, that my object has been to paint the social and not the professional lives of clergymen. . . .

This statement of intent applies with equal force to his handling of all the professions. Since the comedy of manners concerns itself with the behavior of human beings under certain social stresses, it is to be expected that its characters will be viewed rather more as individuals and as representatives of social classes than as representatives of occupations and professions. When Trollope declares that as a novelist he has interested himself only in the social lives of clergymen, he is in the main correct; but it is not true that he avoids taking a position on ecclesiastical policy. The clergy, he rightly perceived, is a society of individuals who share certain theological convictions but who vary widely in background, temperament, and ability. It was this variance, the human element, that interested Trollope. The nature of church work, with its emphasis on conformity not only of creed but of habits of life, even to the minutiae of dress, implies a unanimity of social and intellectual disposition among the clergy. Much of the charm of his novels arises out of the amusing way in which he suggests the diversity in apparent unity. Everyone knows instinctively that this must be so, yet there is an element of surprise in the substantiation of the fact. However blessed be the tie that binds, Bishop Proudie, Archdeacon Grantly, Warden Harding, Josiah Crawley, and Mr. Slope are very nearly as basically different as five men chosen at random from the street are likely to be. This seems to be the substance of Trollope's commentary on the representatives of religion. United in the love of God and of the Church, a dedication which may raise the best of them to lives of saintly selflessness, they may have little more in common than a susceptibility to the frailties of human nature. Trollope is careful not to generalize about the clerical profession.

But Trollope's views on religion and on the clergy take their interest entirely from the fact that his best-known novels consider

and, incidentally, test the social fabric of ecclesiastical life. I do not wish to postpone any longer an examination of the Barsetshire novels.

### *The Chronicles of Barsetshire*

The alpha and omega of Trollope's novel-writing career were not very successful books. That is, of course, no unfamiliar pattern. Between the extremes, however, he became one of the most popular of English writers. The changing tide in his literary affairs came with the publication of *The Warden* (1855). So much has been written about it and about its several sequels that the critic must approach the task of further commentary with considerable trepidation, not wishing to be guilty of repeating what is common knowledge. Nevertheless, there are certain relationships and correspondences among the Barsetshire novels, and certain qualities in the individual titles, that suggest further inquiry.

Professor Lionel Stevenson believes<sup>15</sup> that the origin of *The Warden* is to be found not in the correspondence columns of the *Times*, as Trollope many years later recalled for Escott, but in an article on the Charterhouse which Dickens commissioned for *Household Words* and which appeared in June 1852,<sup>16</sup> just six weeks before Trollope began his novel. This is an attractive theory, not only because it fits the facts but because it explains the inclusion of a caricature portrait of Dickens, which, seemingly unprovoked and irrelevant, has long made Trollopians uncomfortable. It also gives point to the title of Mr. Popular Sentiment's new novel, *The Almshouse*.

In *The Warden* Trollope was striking out in a new direction, not only for himself but for the English novel. He was creating a type of domestic comedy overlying a serious and controversial subject. In *Barchester Towers* the comedy was to be more pronounced, but Trollope here began to understand the possibilities of his characters. He allowed his imagination to play over this material until it took on the shape of fact. "No work that I ever did," he tells us,

"took up so much of my thoughts."<sup>17</sup> Certainly he never again wrote so slowly and so painstakingly. The subject had taken him into a society of which he had little firsthand acquaintance; he could no longer, as in the Irish novels, merely transcribe the real and the actual. And he was not sure how effective his balanced point of view toward his material would be. He declares in the *Autobiography* that he was quite wrong in thinking that he could be sympathetic to Mr. Harding and at the same time attack clerical abuses. Scruples of conscience, he thought, do not make for powerful effects. One senses here an ironic touch that is rare in Trollope's criticism. Of course, he was quite right to see the whole of his subject, not simply one of its parts. How, indeed, could he do otherwise? The beauty of *The Warden* lies precisely in the fact that Septimus Harding, the very heart of incorruptible integrity, blunts the lances of the ecclesiastical crusaders. The balance of forces is magnificently sustained. I do not understand Sadleir's argument that Trollope, faced with the impossibility of a contradictory task, succeeded only in "boxing his own ears."<sup>18</sup>

Most of the critics of *The Warden* interpret Trollope's handling of the central issue of clerical sinecures as proof of his conservatism. The writer of a survey article for the *National Review* in 1858 contends that "his sympathies are all on the side of the guardians and rulers . . . not with the poor."<sup>19</sup> Escott in the same context calls him an "obstinate conservative" and speaks of his "fondness for the old regime."<sup>20</sup> This judgment might be supported by reference to the characterization of John Bold, the reformer who is overbold, or at least overzealous, in his desire to establish and promote justice.

It would be well if one so young had a little more diffidence himself, and more trust in the honest purpose of others—if he could be brought to believe that old customs need not necessarily be evil, and that changes may possibly be dangerous.<sup>21</sup>

But it has already been shown that reform in church organization and management was one of the driving impulses of Trollope's life.<sup>22</sup> The conclusion of the critic for the *National Review* shows how successfully Trollope has dramatized the issues and sublimated a

personal judgment. Escott's conclusion demonstrates the fallacy of applying a truth valid in one field to all fields; Trollope is a political conservative, ergo he supports the established church against reforms. *Non sequitur* here receives a notable illustration.

In discussing the polemical aspects of *The Warden*, a critic is in danger of losing perspective on Trollope's achievement. What side he himself favored in the matter of church vs. almsmen is of little importance. The point of interest is that an ethical problem in the life of an old man is made to bear the weight of a mid-Victorian popular novel. Such a moral dilemma as is pictured here became more familiar in literature after the success of the problem drama of Ibsen, but Trollope anticipates by several decades the shift of interest away from conventional romance. I think it most unfortunate that, having opened the door through which he might have seen something better, he chose quickly to close it and retire to the arid and exhausted areas of the pallid love story. Only once again, in *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, did he concern himself deeply with an issue so significant, one which would enable him to take soundings of the troubled human spirit.

Sadleir calls *The Warden* "very elementary Trollope."<sup>23</sup> It is clear from his discussion that he is disturbed primarily by the weakness of the satiric chapters. Mgr. Ronald Knox is upset by what he calls the "anticlericalism" of the novel.<sup>24</sup> He has in mind Grantly's hidden volume of Rabelais and the tongue-in-cheek descriptions of the doctor's three sons, who are unmistakably named after three prominent bishops. I have no intention of defending Trollope at this point. The windy jibes at Mr. Pessimist Anticant and Mr. Popular Sentiment, by which uninspired names he referred to Carlyle and Dickens, are boyish and out of place. They are also impertinent. The references to clerical frailties are certainly in very bad taste. But Trollope "anti-clerical"? By no means. Unwise in this instance—yes. Satire has its origin in an assumption of superiority. From a young man it is likely to appear saucy, from an old man sour. Trollope later expressed great dislike for the satiric mood and advised Alfred Austin most earnestly against giving way to its temptations.<sup>25</sup> A young man who lashes the vice and does not spare the name strikes

one as bumptious. Trollope did not make this mistake again. In subsequent novels he may throw his darts at the *People's Banner* but not at the *Times*, at Lady Carbury but not at Carlyle.

Trollope's imagination flared only in the act of creating fictitious characters. He could not do a successful take-off on a living person, nor was he notably apt in treating satirically a general idea. Most readers of *The Warden* have squirmed through the satire on Carlyle and Dickens, which is naive, obvious, and heavy-handed. Humorous characters drifting off into caricature did not stimulate the best in Trollope. He was happiest with his clerical types, in the exposition of whom satire could be merely a deflection from the realism in which they were solidly based. Carlyle and Dickens could draw from him only a puerile diatribe, ostensibly humorous, actually strained, forced, and wholly ineffective. Evidence of his inability to handle satirically a general idea without projecting it through a set of amusing drawing-room characters is afforded by *The Struggles of Brown, Jones and Robinson*, begun only a few years after *The Warden*. Here is an avowed attempt to satirize advertising, and here is one of the feeblest books Trollope ever wrote. Dickens might have made something of the characters, but they are the kind of eccentrics who would not have interested Trollope in life and clearly do not engage his fancy in the novel. He had somehow got the wrong bit in his teeth, though he would not admit the mistake until many years later.

The critical response to *The Warden* reminds us that what amuses one generation may often bore another.<sup>26</sup> Judging from the considered opinions of Longman's reader, the Victorian audience, largely evangelical, enjoyed the discomfiture of the Established Church when faced with the sight of its own dirty linen. But no one today has the slightest interest in these disputes apart from the personalities involved. The significance of *The Warden* in Trollope's development as an artist is that at its conclusion he recognized that his strength lay almost entirely in the intense realization of character. "There is no gift," he observed, "which an author can have more useful to him than this."<sup>27</sup> When in the future he forgot that this is so, it was at the peril of his novel, for he had little else to offer.

What Trollope offers in *The Warden* is almost enough for a fine novel. As he saw, the sustaining element is the clerical portraits, especially that of Harding. The warden is the unifying figure in the Barsestshire series, the only character to appear in every novel. In the serenity of his temper, the humbleness of his spirit, and the inviolability of his conscience he is a supremely good man. Yet he is not one of the waxwork paragons of Charlotte Yonge or Elizabeth Sewell or Mrs. Henry Wood. Perhaps this is because, having no doctrinal axe to grind and, more importantly, no didactic purpose, Trollope could afford to make the cathedral and the vicarage simply the setting for some very human doings. He was also shrewd enough to balance the unworldly idealism of the warden with the busy temporalities of the archdeacon. Grantly provides the contrast which sets off Harding's selflessness, but his function is independent as well as complementary. He gives body and strength to a very slight novel because he is a man as steady in his faith as he is volatile in his emotions. In *The Warden* Trollope did not exhaust the rich possibilities of Dr. Grantly, who is described as

a moral man, believing the precepts which he teaches, and believing also that he lives up to them; though we cannot say that he would give his coat to the man who took his cloak, or that he is prepared to forgive his brother even seven times. He is severe enough in exacting his dues, considering that any laxity in this respect would endanger the security of the church. . . .<sup>28</sup>

It is well that Trollope did not find his subject too soon. The style of *The Warden* is still very uneven. He can be most exasperating in his loose regard for verb tenses (see the opening paragraphs of chap. iv), write wooden dialogue (see the exchanges between John and Mary Bold in chap. vi), break into highly inappropriate Dickensian blank verse ("With care precise he places every card,/weighs well the value of each mighty ace,/each guarded king, and comfort-giving queen;/speculates on knave and ten, counts all/his suits, and sets his price upon the whole./ At length a card is led and quick/three others fall upon the board"),<sup>29</sup> and commit a variety of solecisms which called down upon him the abuse of little critics.



Nevertheless, he had learned to write in his ten years' apprenticeship; there are passages in *The Warden* which in mastery of low-keyed understatement and delicious innuendo are virtually unmatched in the fiction of the day. As Escott has shown, Dr. Grantly's visit to the Hospital and speech to the eleven old pensioners is a genuine triumph of light-comedy narrative.

It was this new-found talent for comedy that Trollope developed in his next novel and that makes *Barchester Towers* (1857) rather than *The Last Chronicle* his best-known book. *Barchester Towers* is Trollope's closest approximation to Jane Austen's domestic drawing-room comedy. If Janeites protest that the author of *Emma* would never descend to the farce comedy of Mrs. Proudie's torn dress, one can only admit that this is perhaps the measure of the difference between two fine novelists. Jane Austen's touch was more delicate, more sophisticated, more cerebral perhaps, but Trollope's genius was of the same order, and he should have resisted the lure of Dickensian capers. The Mrs. Proudie-Mr. Slope portraits, drawn in high colors, introduce elements which do not occur in *The Warden* and which I think *Barchester Towers* would be better without. But there is little doubt that Mrs. Proudie, who appealed to the Victorian taste for caricature, made Trollope's reputation and is still associated in the minds of general readers with Mr. Pickwick, Major Pendennis, Mrs. Poyser, and other notable examples of period characterization.

Not every critic interprets Mrs. Proudie in these terms. Hugh Walpole regards her as the triumph of the Barchester series, very real both as a type and as an individual. She "always rings true."<sup>30</sup> He contends that she is not a caricature, that she is by no means hateful, as is Mr. Slope, that Trollope presents her without bias and disposes of her tenderly and regretfully at last. It is true, of course, that she is sincere in her faith, as is the archdeacon in his, and that she finds it difficult to maintain her prejudices in the face of Mrs. Quiverful's distress. To this extent she is redeemed from the stereotype to which she is otherwise condemned. But one feels that she is more devotedly committed to the pursuit of power than

to the welfare of the church. To this end she is led by her vixenish temper to disregard first the common social decencies and then the essential human decencies until she does indeed, as Crawley is driven to tell her, debase her husband's high calling. Such a character has enormous possibilities, but to my mind Trollope fails to take advantage of them because in several scenes, notably the reception, he must make her a comic figure. After that there can be little reality.

An important narrative adjunct in the Victorian novel is satire. Dickens huffed against various social abuses, Thackeray exposed the follies of *Vanity Fair*, Meredith taught men to recognize their frailties by developing the comic spirit. All were masters of satiric techniques. Indeed, few novelists of the age were not touched, however lightly, with the satiric brush, and Trollope is no exception. He does not write satire into his formula for fiction, but as a practitioner of the comedy of manners he was to some extent committed to a satiric interpretation of life. Every reader knows that he is most charming when his fancy plays airily over oddities and eccentricities of personality. The satiric is not his normal manner of expression. But when the character is a Mrs. Proudie or a Mr. Slope, a jocular, bantering, satiric tone is both appropriate and inevitable. Actually, Trollope was skeptical about the efficacy of satire except for humorous purposes. In a letter to Alfred Austin he contended that satire "written solely with the object of censuring faults in the world presumed by the satyrist to be so grievous as to oppress the virtues"<sup>31</sup> is probably neither useful nor true.

I do not believe that such writings have ever done good, or have left other impress than that of the cynic disposition, and power, of the writer. I doubt whether Juvenal ever aided at all in the suppression of vice;—but Horace, who was not a satyrist by profession, & who is playful and even good-natured in his very satyres, did probably teach men to be less absurd in their manner of writing, of speaking, and of eating than they would have been without him. Byron as a satyrist was wholly powerless on vice, simply leaving the impression that he, a man gifted with strong powers of description, had to avenge himself upon a world that had injured him. And satire runs ever into exaggeration, leaving the conviction

that not justice but revenge, is desired. The exaggeration probably may come from no such feeling, but from the natural tendency of the writer to seek ever for strong and still stronger modes of expression; till at last all truth is lost in the charm of heaping epithet on epithet and figure on figure;—as the eater loses the flavour of his meat through the multiplied uses of sauces and pepper.<sup>32</sup>

Trollope's meliorism led him to reject general satire, but his perceptive knowledge of men taught him our common failings. He did not share Hawthorne's and Melville's vision of evil; he thought men often mischievous and foolish rather than depraved. This good-humored view of life resulted satirically in Horatian laughter at absurdities of conduct. Mrs. Proudie's domineering control over the bishop deprives her of what Trollope thought was most precious to a woman—her femininity. Yet, though she is satirized, she is no Mrs. Mackenzie, and in the *Autobiography* Trollope writes of her in an affectionate defense. Her tyranny knew the bitterness of repentance, he implies, and this self-realization gives her substance as a human being. Obadiah Slope, on the other hand, is without self-knowledge. An oleaginous sycophant, an indomitable self-seeker, impervious to insults, he scarcely knows that he has faults. Depress him in one area and he pops out in another, full of confident bounce and aggressive amiability. He is a perfect target for satiric attack, but Trollope fires only birdshot, stinging rather than deadly. We are amused, not revolted, by this slippery character. We know he is worthless, but like his creator we wish him only confounded, not destroyed.

Though Trollope could accept in good spirit ecclesiastical failings which resulted from personal weaknesses, and attempt in his own way to urge private reforms, he shows no such tolerance for those—either in the church or out of it—who would alter doctrine or form. He does not advocate the shortest way with the dissenters, but it is clear that they are fair game for all the arts of ridicule. Mrs. Proudie's Sabbatarian adherents are little better than the Evangelicals, and both demand the full power of Trollope's satiric skill. In thus belaboring iconoclasts, Trollope was simply emphasizing his mother's dislike of the "Methodies" and other Low-Churchmen. The Barsetshire caricatures of Mrs. Proudie and Mr. Slope, whose per-

sistent effort it is to break through long established and deeply venerated Anglican ceremonies and rituals, reflect deep loyalties to tradition. The Oxford heresies, infinitely more sinister in their implications for Anglicanism, do not prominently concern Trollope; but Proudism, with its brusque social manners and domineering intellectual arrogance, must be met with his most effective satiric weapons.

Beatrice Curtis Brown calls Trollope "the perfect bed-book writer."<sup>33</sup> Perhaps Trollope, who rarely tried to be anything more, would have been satisfied with such limited praise. But one who thinks that he might have been greater than a mere entertainer cannot be happy with his narrow aims. I can hear the objection, "Why spoil a first-rate entertainer to turn out a second-rate philosopher? Trollope had no depth, no penetration. Why can't you be satisfied with his brilliant surface rendering? Each man to his talent." I can only say that I think Trollope had it in him to write one or two really great books, but he never gave himself the opportunity, always capitulating to the Victorian artist's own variety of compromise. What he did with Mrs. Proudie, or rather what he did not do with her, is precisely a case in point. There is no stretch, no reach, no development. Mrs. Proudie undergoes no conflict, no testing of the spirit. She is not called upon to wrestle with her conscience,<sup>34</sup> as does Mr. Harding, nor suffer martyrdom, as does Mr. Crawley. The Proudies do not change, and thus they have become tags: the domineering wife and the henpecked husband. True, the novelist must have done his job well that his characters are recognized as types, but how much greater his achievement if they speak to us of the passions of the universal heart. Miss Curtis Brown makes one of the shrewdest remarks about Trollope I have seen when she calls *Barchester Towers* "one of the books most entertaining to read, yet one of the less deeply interesting—it makes a shallower impact on the mind although it undoubtedly makes a lasting impact on the memory."<sup>35</sup>

The implications of this criticism have a wide applicability, taking in virtually all of Trollope's work. His novels are so vivid that we

are not likely to forget the best of them, but they do not move us profoundly. Perhaps that is the penalty which must be borne by one who contents himself with the comedy of manners.

On its serious side *Barchester Towers* continues the story of which *The Warden* serves as prologue. The decisions to be made are those of replacements for bishop, dean, and warden. In the course of following the ecclesiastical and parochial stratagems by which these appointments are procured, Trollope once again balances arguments and philosophies. The Low-Church proclivities of the Proudies and Mr. Slope, with their sponsorship of an arid Sabbatarianism, are made the object of ridicule. But in Dr. Stanhope, a High-Church sybarite, living an easy expatriate life on a salary which he does nothing to earn, we are shown a target at which the *Jupiter* might well have leveled its heaviest guns. It is one at which Trollope, at least, never hesitated to fire. Neither of the factions has a corner on all the virtues, and each is vulnerable to criticism—the one because it would sweep away that which is rich in tradition, and the other because it tolerates that which has grown rank and useless.

While he is chronicling this little internecine struggle, Trollope is arranging before us a set of English clerical types. In addition to Mr. Harding and the archdeacon, carried over from *The Warden*, there are five newcomers: the pompous, ineffective bishop; his officious chaplain, Mr. Slope; the absentee vicar, Dr. Stanhope; the resident vicar, Mr. Quiverful (briefly mentioned earlier); and the new dean, Mr. Arabin. Quiverful represents the rural vicar, devoted to his responsibilities but without imagination and meekly ineffective, struggling incompetently to maintain himself and family (in this case fourteen children). Arabin represents the Oxford scholar out of his native waters, adjusting himself somewhat chokingly to the unfamiliar heavy atmosphere of cathedral politics. He is offered up by the author as a poet and a wit, dripping with eloquence and humor. To this reader he is, alas, a very dull and awkward fellow. Only one type does not appear—the hard-working curate of unappreciated ability, performing God's work patiently and selflessly.

He was to come later as Josiah Crawley, wearing a crown of thorns and inspiring Anthony Trollope to something like greatness as a novelist.

In spite of their prominence, however, the clerics provide only the background of *Barchester Towers*. The foreground is dominantly social. In addition to the *omnium gatherum* of Mrs. Proudie's reception there is the love plot, altogether tedious, of Eleanor Harding Bold and her admirers; Mr. Slope, Bertie Stanhope, and Mr. Arabin. There is Madeline Stanhope Neroni, with her insatiable desire for attention from men.<sup>36</sup> There is Wilfred Thorne with his passion for Montaigne and Burton, and Monica Thorne with her passion for genealogy. And there is the picturesque interlude of "Ullathorne Sports," with all the makeweight business of the Lookalofts and Greenacres. In fact, there is a great deal of social bustle in *Barchester Towers*, with characters moving in from the wings, staying briefly in the center of the stage, and then moving on. Trollope gives us variety within condensed scenes, and homogeneity within the limits of his total purpose. *Barchester Towers* is a very busy, a very lively book, and I do not know that anyone would care to contradict Trollope's statement that it is "one of those novels which do not die quite at once."<sup>37</sup>

*Doctor Thorne* (1858), the next of the Barsetshire novels, turns one's attention to the matter of plotting. In *The Philosophy of Fiction* Grant Overton contends that the history of the novel is simply the history of the decay of plot.<sup>38</sup> This is undoubtedly so. But Overton is wrong, I believe, in regretting that it is so. To argue, as some critics do, that the less plot a story has, the better that story is, may be a fallacy, as Overton attempts to show;<sup>39</sup> but surely the novel owes its expanding vitality to the fact that it has been free to experiment beyond the long exhausted possibilities of plot. If it is on the one hand unfortunate that the principles of fiction, unlike those of poetry and the drama, were never formally set down, it has been on the other hand the salvation of a developing art. An Aristotle of prose fiction might not only have frozen subject matter and technique, he would have made self-conscious a form which needed to

grow naturally. No Aristotle appearing, the novel ran its thoughtless course through all the plots, then began to look for other opportunities.

In the mid-nineteenth century Trollope was one of those who hastened the decay of plot. *The Warden* had been no more than the examination of a situation, a case of conscience—exactly the kind of plot circumstance that was to engage the critical and creative attention of Henry James. *Doctor Thorne*, a fully plotted, dramatic (not to say melodramatic) novel, is uncharacteristic. For all its interest, *Doctor Thorne* is a regressive book for Trollope. But it is significant that the uncharacteristic element, the full-blown plot, is not original with Anthony at all but with his brother Tom, who supplied the story. The quality (in Shakespeare's sense) of the other Barsetshire novels is the evocation of character in a time-space relationship. The quality of *Doctor Thorne* is too mixed to be apprehended in a phrase. The Thornes, the Greshams, and the de Courcys, with their complex yet essentially simple social relationships, are touched with the fire of Barset—and are quite unquenchable, as all delighted readers of Angela Thirkell are well aware. But the Scatcherd story is strictly out of Mrs. Archer Clive, or Mary Elizabeth Braddon, or Mrs. Henry Wood. Paroled murderers who are knighted for unnamed services as railway contractors and die of delirium tremens are little known in Barsetshire. They are well known in London and are to be seen there in later novels, but Sir Roger brings into Barsetshire elements of Victorian sensationalism which are quite out of place. Trollope, the realist who does not care for melodrama, describes a poor but honest lass of unorthodox parentage whose marriage into a higher social stratum is made possible when she unexpectedly inherits a fortune from a rich uncle of whose existence she had been unaware. Cinderella becomes the fairy princess; the milkmaid is really the long-lost daughter of the king. Could some such thoughts have been running through Trollope's mind when in the *Autobiography* he made one of the most surprising of his self-judgments: that *Doctor Thorne* and *The Bertrams* "are of about equal merit, but . . . neither of them is good." <sup>40</sup>

Historians of the novel often compare the *Chronicles of Barsetshire* with Mrs. Oliphant's *Chronicles of Carlingford*. *Salem Chapel* (1863), the first of Mrs. Oliphant's stories, has been called by Oliver Elton, for whose critical sense I usually have the highest admiration, "a much better novel than *Felix Holt* . . . a very good novel."<sup>41</sup> But I know of nothing better designed to emphasize Trollope's genius than a reading of *Salem Chapel*. The setting is a clerical community and the protagonist a young Nonconformist minister, but the action is strictly Victorian melodrama of the most preposterous sort. The style is overwrought, and the emotions of suffering are made ludicrous by exaggeration. Trollope survives as a readable novelist precisely because he avoided the false coloring which Mrs. Oliphant could not resist. Neither one, it might be remarked, was interested in theological dogma, as were Kingsley, Mark Rutherford, or Mrs. Henry Wood. In some of the other *Chronicles of Carlingford*, notably *Phoebe Junior*, Mrs. Oliphant is more relaxed and should have been content with the social scene of matrimonial comedy in an atmosphere of parish gossip, which she does well, but bits and snatches of romantic plotting would come filtering in. Only Trollope's remarkable balance as a man and his instinctive integrity as an artist kept *Doctor Thorne* from going the way of *Salem Chapel*.

Sentimentalists will no doubt deplore a skeptical attitude toward a novel which has given and will certainly continue to give a great deal of pleasure. *Doctor Thorne* has, of course, many appealing touches and, apart from the sensational effects, much that is essentially Trollopian. The characteristic story centers about Mary Thorne and, as Trollope would say, teaches a very wholesome lesson, one which he never tired of emphasizing; namely, that in a girl innocence of heart and kindness of spirit take precedence over all other virtues, that rank and fortune must yield to love and honor. The subject of a possible Gresham *mésalliance*, developed with an implied democratic theme, was to become virtually a Trollope trade-mark. That he should have devoted himself so patiently and indeed so repetitively to its exposition indicates its importance in his social thinking.

The nature of Trollope's conservative-liberalism is given a signifi-



cant illustration in his treatment of *mésalliance* in *Doctor Thorne*. When the Greshams of Greshamsbury Park are introduced, we are told that good breeding is important to the maintenance of the glories of England, that the old families have contributed something precious to English life. Even though their luster may be dimmed, the landed aristocracy shine forth the ancient and durable virtues of the race.

. . . the old symbols remained, and may such symbols long remain among us; they are still lovely and fit to be loved. But they tell us of the true and manly feelings of other times; and to him who can read aright, they explain more fully, more truly than any written history can do, how Englishmen have become what they are.<sup>42</sup>

On the other hand, what is offered by the commercial class, of whom Scatterd is a representative? What respect is owed the former stonemason who makes his fortune in trade?

Buying and selling is good and necessary; it is very necessary, and may, possibly, be very good; but it cannot be the noblest work of man; and let us hope that it may not in our time be esteemed the noblest work of an Englishman.<sup>43</sup>

But when the aristocracy begins to act like *nouveaux riches*, studying to preserve the family fortunes rather than the old tradition, Trollope can no longer support their right to respect. Thus Arabella Gresham, who has no other thought than to marry off advantageously (i.e., by marrying money) her dowerless daughters and her portionless son, is portrayed as a selfish and heartless schemer. Her own family, the insufferably proud and snobbish de Courcys, are held up throughout the chronicles of Barssetshire as prime examples of the fallacy of protecting the ancient lineage at the expense of the ancient virtues.

In expressing surprise at the success of *Doctor Thorne*, Trollope says that it has neither the pathos nor the humor of *The Three Clerks*. This is true, and Trollope should have learned something from his own observation. The savor of his work comes not from calculated and artful use of familiar condiments from the Victorian spice-shaker but from the quality of the article itself. The approving

response to *Doctor Thorne* or, for that matter, to any other of Trollope's novels comes because we have been touched by two or three characters. Apparently the artist does not always know when or how he has communicated his insights. We may read perhaps a score of novels. Nineteen of them fade into those recesses of the mind from which recall is difficult. Some of the nineteen may be well written, with flecks and shreds of poetry; some may catch for a moment a distant glimpse of transcendent spiritual beauty; some may be gay and pleasantly diverting—but all become dim and shadowy. The twentieth, however, stays close to the surface of the mind, breaking through from time to time with sharp, apperceptive needles of recognition as we assimilate new experiences. The chapters of *Doctor Thorne* which concern Martha Dunstable, Arabella de Courcy, and the doctor himself have this kind of durable reality. It is a reality that is never provided by plot. Insofar as the best of Trollope conjures up people and states of consciousness rather than events he contributes to the decay of the story element in fiction.

Six months after the marriage of Mary Thorne and Frank Gresham, Mark Robarts, vicar of Framley Church, accepted an invitation to go to Chaldicotes as guest of Nathaniel Sowerby. And Trollope, at the flattering behest of Thackeray and George Smith, was back again in Bassetshire. Here was his test, a momentous occasion in his life. If he failed, his chance of becoming a best-selling novelist on his own rather than the public's terms would be remote. If he succeeded, there would be no honorable ambition which he might not satisfy. It was an opportunity to call from a writer the best that he had. Casting aside the partially completed manuscript of *Castle Richmond*, Trollope threw together his new novel with an efficiency and dispatch that must have amazed the dilatory Thackeray. *Framley Parsonage* (1861) pleased everybody. If it is not his best book, it is the most characteristic, the most Trollopian of all his stories. No other English novelist could have written it.

As Trollope indicates at the end of the eighth chapter of his *Autobiography*, he was by this time quite at home in his new shire.

I had it all in my mind,—its roads and railroads, its towns and parishes, its members of parliament, and the different hunts which rode over it. I knew all the great lords and their castles, the squires and their parks, the rectors and their churches. . . . I made a map of the dear county. Throughout these stories there has been no name given to a fictitious site which does not represent to me a spot of which I know all the accessories, as though I had lived and wandered there.<sup>44</sup>

Even had Trollope not told us, we should know something of his identification with the setting. A background so sharply perceived could come only from an intimate imaginative relationship. For Trollope this sense of place, this spatial harmony, began to substitute for the more familiar forms of creative fancy. He did not need a dramatic plot. It was enough to lead a few characters through a series of simple steps that had become almost ritualized. The interest in this rural ballet is not that of surprise but of expectation.

To nineteenth-century readers, especially those in metropolitan areas, a novel such as *Framley Parsonage* must have had considerable interest as social commentary on a type of self-contained village and county life which even then was passing. The quiet turbulence at the parsonage, the small talk at Chaldicotes, the even smaller talk at Gatherum Castle, the hard economies at Hoggstock, the easy splendor at Lufton Park—all these scenes and the people who gave them vitality offered a view of middle and upper class society and of the gradations of rank within these groups which could not be duplicated elsewhere in literature. To twentieth-century readers these values are doubled, for what was once reporting has now become history, taking an increasing significance with the obsolescence of the society described.

The prescience of George Smith as a publisher is well attested, but nowhere better than in his selection of Trollope to hew the great lump out of the English earth and put it under glass. The assignment could have gone to no one better qualified. The postal inspector who had tramped and ridden the country Land's End to John o' Groats had been unconsciously doing his research for many years for a social history in fiction. When called upon at last for a

clerical story that would be a commentary on classes and manners, on the political squirearchy as well as the ecclesiastical hierarchy, he found it necessary merely to hang the mental notes of twenty years on a finely-drawn wire of narrative.

In the *Autobiography* Trollope calls the plot of *Framley Parsonage* a "hodge-podge."<sup>45</sup> This is not strictly true. No doubt he had in mind the numerous story lines of this novel, the narrative fragments describing Mark Robarts' financial problems, Lord Lufton's and Lucy Robarts' matrimonial problems, Lady Lufton's problems of conscience, Josiah Crawley's problems of survival, Harold Smith's political problems, Nathaniel Sowerby's legal problems, Mrs. Proudie's problems of social and ecclesiastical control, and Martha Dunstable's problems of fending off insincere suitors. A deal of plot—yes, but a hodgepodge, no; because unlike those of *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, the story lines of *Framley Parsonage* are complementary. They merge naturally and easily. The camera eye is wide-angled and takes in almost the whole of Barsetshire, but there is an effective unity. *Framley Parsonage* is the fullest chronicle of Barset; it looks as far back as *The Warden*, and it looks ahead to the Palliser novels.

Perhaps one should say that Trollope gives us a series of tableaux, for there is very little action and virtually nothing in the way of suspense. Even in *The Small House at Allington*, which has only the love story to sustain it, one's curiosity is engaged, however mildly, in seeing Lily Dale through her folly to a destiny which is not quite predictable. But surely no readers, practiced or unpracticed in the conventions of Victorian plotting, ever thought that Lucy Robarts would not win Lady Lufton's approval. The pattern had already been formed in *Doctor Thorne* and was thought sufficiently serviceable to be used many times again. The tableau which drew Trollope's most active interest was that of the likable young rector, with his confusions and his small indiscretions. As Trollope ruefully admitted, "The love of his sister for the young lord was an adjunct necessary because there must be love in a novel."<sup>46</sup> The function of the other tableaux, apparently, is to add interest and

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variety through the charm of familiar characters in generally unfamiliar situations.

Most of the commentators, as usual, have found the virtues of the book in the characters. Some have followed Trollope's lead in being sentimental about Lucy Robarts, his "most natural English girl,"<sup>47</sup> or Mark Robarts, in whom, we are told, the chief interest lies.<sup>48</sup> Some have found Sowerby an admirable scoundrel,<sup>49</sup> and one sees in Lufton Trollope's "only heroic young man."<sup>50</sup> Lucy has an independence of mind and a forthrightness that Trollope always admired in a girl; Robarts, whose mistake it was to think that he could touch pitch and not be defiled,<sup>51</sup> is a good sketch of amiable weakness; Sowerby is weighed in an impartial Browningsque scale in which the beam tips freely each way; Lufton, perhaps because a "hero," is colorless. I think it fair to say that the characters are interesting but not moving, and perhaps the remark can be given a wider application to the novel itself.

Trollope says of *Framley Parsonage* that "there is no very weak part,—no long succession of dull pages."<sup>52</sup> One may accept this assertion and still deny to the novelist more than a modest measure of achievement. There is a want of energy in the book, a lack of urgency in the manner of its exposition. Sadleir has described *Framley Parsonage* as "pleasant but artificial."<sup>53</sup> I do not know that it is more artificial than any other of the Barsetshire series; in fact, I should say that it is less so than *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, a vastly better novel. I should be tempted to call it simply "pleasant," a somewhat equivocal adjective for an equivocal book.

When in 1878 Trollope entered into protracted negotiations with publishers to make possible a uniform edition of "The Chronicles of Barsetshire," he did not intend that *The Small House at Allington* (1864) should be one of the novels in the series. That it ultimately appeared in its proper place was owing to the entirely reasonable insistence of Chapman & Hall. Trollope's reluctance must be traced to his very precise definition of a Barset novel. *The Small House* he always held in high regard; indeed, he thought that he

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had never done better work.<sup>54</sup> Yet it seemed to him not strictly a sequel to the earlier novels. It is difficult to justify the distinction which he tried to make. True, only two characters from *The Warden* appear at any length: Griselda Grantly and Septimus Harding, and the latter is brought in forcibly rather than naturally. But the de Courcys are prominently introduced, and so many others are spoken about (the Proudies, the Grantlys, Mrs. Arabin) that the Barsetshire atmosphere is strong. A definition of the series which excludes *The Small House* must also, it seems to me, exclude *Doctor Thorne*. Most readers will probably consider Trollope's decision against *The Small House* as capricious.

Nevertheless, *The Small House* is perhaps the weakest link in the chain.<sup>55</sup> There is a want of force, a lack of spark, in this slow-paced narrative; in consequence, there are a number of heavy chapters that can only be described as dull. This is the judgment that one must render against the whole Lily Dale-Crosbie romance. The Lily-Johnny Eames narrative is much heartier and much livelier, not only because Johnny is attractively and sympathetically presented (I cannot understand the judgment of the Stebbinses, who call him "loud-mouthed" and "boobish"<sup>56</sup>), but also because Trollope was perceptive enough and strong enough to resist the sentimental Victorian plot stereotype. Trollope tells us that many demands were made by frivolous or immature readers that Johnny be rewarded for his constancy. A reply to one such correspondent has recently come to light.

You were angry with me because I did not make my pet happy with a husband, but you would have been more angry if I had made it all smooth, and supposed her capable of loving a second man while the wound of her first love was still so fresh. Indeed the object of the story was to show that a girl under such circumstances should bear the effects of her own impudence, & not rid herself of her sorrow too easily. . . .<sup>57</sup>

This answer suffices for the denouement of *The Small House*, but it does not suffice for *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, where Lily is indeed the French prig that Trollope describes in the *Autobiography*, nursing her wounded feelings and taking out her aggressions on the

faithful Johnny, who is by this time, one suspects, too good for her.

The interest of Johnny lies initially in Trollope's own life, but the sustaining power of the characterization is intrinsic in the concept of his humanity. Trollope saw him as a typical junior clerk, somewhat at loose ends in the city—swaggering a bit at times, perhaps, but more often grave and self-conscious. He has his moods of easy confidence and exuberance and his moods of blackness and impotent despair; is not this the pattern of most young men on their own in an impersonal society? One imagines that Johnny came easily to Trollope, for he has the authenticity of observed and recollected experience. Perhaps because Trollope slipped naturally into self-identification with Johnny, he never showed so firm a grasp of psychology. Consider, for example, the scene immediately following Lily's rejection of Johnny's proposal.

He made his way out by the front door, and through the churchyard, and in this way on to the field through which he had asked Lily to walk with him. He hardly began to think of what had passed till he had left the squire's house behind him. As he made his way through the tombstones he paused and read one, as though it interested him. He stood a moment under the tower looking up at the clock, and then pulled out his own watch as though to verify the one by the other. He made, unconsciously, a struggle to drive away from his thoughts the facts of the last scene, and for some five or ten minutes he succeeded. He said to himself a word or two about Sir Raffle and his letters, and laughed inwardly as he remembered the figure of Rafferty bringing in the knight's shoes. He had gone some half mile upon his way before he ventured to stand still and tell himself that he had failed in the great object of his life.<sup>58</sup>

This is masterly in its simplicity and in its truth. So too is the meeting a few moments later with Lady Julia de Guest, who comes upon Johnny as he is cutting out Lily's name from the wooden rail on which he had carved it some time before.

"She has refused me, and it is all over."

"It may be that she has refused you, and that yet it need not be all

over. I am sorry that you have cut out the name, John. Do you mean to cut it out from your heart?"

"Never. I would if I could, but I never shall."

"Keep to it as to a great treasure. It will be a joy to you in after years, and not a sorrow. To have loved truly, even though you shall have loved in vain, will be a consolation when you are as old as I am. It is something to have had a heart."<sup>59</sup>

No doubt many modern readers put down *The Small House* with something of the amused incredulity of the reviewer for the *Illustrated Times*: "How *does* the man contrive to make his stories so interesting, while he keeps so very near the surface of things? What magic is this which gets such a heap of entertainment out of next to nothing?"<sup>60</sup> The questions are actually relevant and fundamental, for their implications touch the bases of Trollope's purposes and techniques in the novel. Precise and detailed answers are difficult, but perhaps some suggestions of the Trollopian *modus operandi* can be made.

Trollope's world is one of complicated social strategy, of the drawing-room tactics of hint, innuendo, and concealed artifice. It is one of contending forces, pressing shades of advantage offered both by character and by circumstance. One remembers the cool skill with which the impassive Lady Dumbello contrives through her frigid beauty to achieve social position; or the soft-spoken power of the old Duke of Omnium, who, disapproving of Plantagenet Palliser's tentative advances to Lady Dumbello, has only to drop a word to his man of business; or the clever stratagem by which Lily is enabled to meet on advantageous terms Hopkins, her masterful gardener.

. . . Hopkins appeared at the parlour window, and signified his desire for a conference.

"You must come round," said Lily. "It's too cold for the window to be opened. [To Mrs. Dale:] I always like to get him into the house, because he feels himself a little abashed by the chairs and tables; or, perhaps, it is the carpet that is too much for him. Out on the gravel-walks he is such a terrible tyrant, and in the greenhouse he almost tramples upon one."<sup>61</sup>



If Trollope's imagination plays only over the surface, as the critic contends, so likewise does Oscar Wilde's. The writer of the comedy of manners can scarcely be asked to do more. Of these two practitioners of different varieties of the form, Wilde is, of course, the more sparkling. Trollope is no phrase-maker. But Trollope's humor is more subtle. Some of the nuances of character relationship in *The Small House* are incomparably delicate: that moment at which Crosbie recognizes what must forever be his position in the eyes of the Countess de Courcy, when he suddenly finds himself "enveloped in the fumes of an affectionate but somewhat contemptuous patronage"; or the uneasy balance of power between Crosbie and Lady Julia de Guest, who first triumphs over the young man's worldliness but then cannot stand against his bold assurance; or the shrewd way in which Lily asserts the claims of grief and martyrdom to assume a tyrannic control (no less powerful for its semi-playful touch) over the conduct of her mother and sister. Trollope is particularly skillful, as the *Spectator* reviewer saw,<sup>62</sup> in suggesting how one person may dominate another by the clever exercise of a vague unexpended resource, an unexpressed hint of menace, a totally unfair play upon good will and known sympathies.

All these evidences of a clear-sighted perception of human motives, of their origin and their expression, are to be found in *The Small House*. If the novel remains, nevertheless, one of the least interesting of the Barsetshire series, we have additional proof of the richness of Trollope's gift.

Hugh Walpole's summary criticism of the Barsetshire novels is pertinent and trenchant. He believes that although Trollope gives us "wonderful true pictures of a section of human life," the novels lack universality and poetical mysticism. These are qualities which one finds in *Crime and Punishment*, *Anna Karenina*, *War and Peace*, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, *Illusions Perdues*, and *The Return of the Native*. Trollope's novels do not "challenge the whole general material and spiritual world in the conduct of the single character."<sup>63</sup>

Walpole is certainly right, but his generalization is put to an exact-

ing test when one considers *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867). Here Trollope, wittingly or not, made a bid for universality, and very nearly achieved it. But Walpole's view of the novel, though fully appreciative in unspecific terms, is curiously focused. "We are excited," he says, "as to whether or no Mr. Crawley has stolen the cheque, but his fate is not a general fate as is the death of Ivan Ivanovitch, or the shabby ruin of Emma Bovary or the sad loneliness of Tess."<sup>64</sup> One must assume here an odd misunderstanding of both the source and the nature of the hold which Josiah Crawley has on Trollope's readers, including Hugh Walpole himself. Surely nobody has ever been excited about who stole the check, this despite the fact Trollope almost made the colossal error of calling the novel, "The Story of a Cheque for £20, and of the Mischief Which It Did."<sup>65</sup> An attentive reader has never from first to last been concerned about Crawley's innocence, which, given his character, is an unchallengeable assumption. To question his integrity is to miss the entire point of Trollope's intent. Crawley is a fascinating character, the most complex Trollope ever conceived, because the issues which are entailed in his social and ethical responses are profound. The issues which are entailed in discovering who stole £20 are probably trivial to insignificant, but the character of the perpetual curate of Hoggelstock transcends the local and the temporal, as well as the action itself.

The central issue in *The Last Chronicle* is, I believe, merit vs. special privilege. It is significant that Trollope makes the lowliest cleric in the Barsetshire hierarchy the most spiritually dedicated of its members. That he should have done so merely gives emphasis to views which he had long held on a situation that was at this time, as we have seen, giving him much concern. How can one defend in ethics the values of a society that ignores integrity and tolerates a travesty on justice? The frustrated career of a man of ability is the stuff of tragedy, but Trollope did not meet his opportunity squarely. Here there is no tragedy. In his facile resolution of the problems which he had raised Trollope lost his chance to put Josiah Crawley beside Karamazov and Père Goriot and King Lear. The comparisons are not fanciful and unapt, for in those dark moments of Crawley's

anguish and bitter despair our hearts are touched with pity, and there is something very like a true Aristotelian catharsis. Only in Lady Mason's inarticulate suffering is there a challenge to the high passion of Crawley's prideful agony. Anthony Trollope became briefly a *great* rather than merely a clever novelist. Perhaps it is beside the point and quite unfair to listen for cosmic overtones in professed comedies of manners, but in its main plot *The Last Chronicle* is not a typical Trollopian novel. It falls short of the highest distinctions of art through faults of organization and taste which will be noted in a moment, but those sections dealing with Crawley rise toward a sublimity which Trollope rarely sought. I do not doubt that he was thinking of these scenes when he wrote to Mary Holmes, "The best novel I ever wrote was the Last Chronicle of Barset."<sup>66</sup>

When the golden bowl is heaped with rare fruit, one dare not complain of privation, but it may not be ungracious to regret that the bowl itself is flawed. Such is the case here. A novelist of character, Trollope paid scant attention to shaping and controlling his plots. In consequence, few can be praised structurally. But not many are so vulnerable to criticism on this point as *The Last Chronicle*. The strength of a potentially great novel was fatally dissipated by weaknesses of organization. In the first place, the major premise of the plot is unacceptable. Trollope asks us to believe that a clergyman living close to the subsistence level could forget where he got a check that represented nearly one-sixth of his annual stipend. How to make convincing such a lapse of memory in even an abstracted and absent-minded clergyman troubled the author, who worked hard to surround his awkward premise with an aura of the possible. Later, however, he admitted his failure: "I cannot quite make myself believe that even such a man as Mr. Crawley could have forgotten how he got it."<sup>67</sup> In *King Lear* the basic situation is similarly difficult, but in both works, though fussy readers may profess to be annoyed, the over-all effectiveness of the dramatic impact is not greatly diminished.

More reprehensible than the improbable core situation is the fragmented subplotting. A favorite sport some years ago was to abridge

Dickens—often to the improvement of the novels, if to the hot indignation of devout Dickensians. I do not know that such surgery has ever been performed on Trollope's subplots, but I should suggest *The Last Chronicle* as a likely possibility. Few of his stories have more irrelevant plot material. The pruning of some of these extraneous growths would unify the whole novel. There is no doubt that the reintroduction of the Lily Dale-Johnny Eames love story is both forced and impertinent, distracting one's attention from the harmony of the Crawley plot. There is even less excuse for the London scenes which center about Adolphus Crosbie, Bernard Dale, Emily Dunstable, and Martha Dunstable Thorne. Worst of all is the Broughton-Van Siever-Demolines episode. The material is discordant—a bit of vulgarity brushing the sheen off the sublime—and the writing is shoddy. Here is true bathos. Many sins may be laid at the doors of publishers who insisted on the profits from three, rather than one or two, volumes; but I can think of none less excusable than that to which may be attributed the petering out of this fine novel. Even such a good-natured apologist for Trollope as Edward Fitzgerald found the weaker episodes unendurable: "I fancied I could always read A. Trollope: but his last Barset has made me skip here and there."<sup>68</sup>

It was natural that in his last chronicle of Barset Trollope should wish to bid farewell to *all* his favorite characters. But given the nature of the chief plot incidents, it was impossible to bring forward everyone save by dragging in several by the heels. The plan had a sentimental justification, but Trollope came to grief because the integration of these disparate elements was poor, as under the circumstances it was almost bound to be. *The Last Chronicle* comprises four separate but unequal stories developed through ninety-four characters with speaking parts. To integrate such material would have strained the organizational talents of a Wilkie Collins. Trollope had no such skill.

But one does not finish *The Last Chronicle* in a captious mood. There are people and scenes which lodge themselves unshakably in the memory. Crawley provides the high drama, but Trollope sees others of his characters boldly and surely. One recalls with un-

ashamed tenderness the ineffable gentility of Septimus Harding. I should have no quarrel with him who contends that Trollope's finest scene (because best controlled) is Mr. Harding's death. The delicacy and the firmness of the lines that might so easily have become blurred are beyond praise. Fitzgerald wrote to W. B. Donne, "The Account of old Harding with his Violincello in Vol. II is—better than Sterne—inasmuch as it is more unaffected & true."<sup>69</sup> One recalls the pleasure of seeing the domineering competence of Mrs. Proudie finally checked by Crawley's exasperated rebuke. Her defeat in the palace interview is a memorable moment in English fiction. One recalls the submissive weakness of the bishop and the pious worldliness of the archdeacon; these are not less skillfully patterned to the fabric of the plot than is the pathological stubbornness of Crawley. There is infinite regret that Trollope should have taken seriously a chance remark overhead at the Athenaeum. Yet the termination of the Barsetshire series may have been wise. That another county novel would have been anticlimactic is probable. We must be content with what we have, and certainly we *should* be. We shall be hard put, at any rate, to find in English fiction a more vivid character than Josiah Crawley and more vivid scenes than the best chapters of *The Last Chronicle of Barset*.

A word should be said about Trollope's footnote to the Barchester novels, *The Two Heroines of Plumplington* (1882), a charming novelette which on its own merits quite justifies the recent reprint. But perhaps the point of chief interest is the setting: "All the world may not know that Plumplington is the second town in Barsetshire, and though it sends no member to Parliament, as does Silverbridge, it has a population of over 20,000 souls."<sup>70</sup> *The Last Chronicle* is therefore not the last chronicle of Barset, Trollope having made a sentimental pilgrimage to his beloved shire in the last year of his life. The chief characters in *The Two Heroines of Plumplington* are new, but at least one character has a familiar ring. Harry Gresham, described as "a son of the Greshams of Greshamsbury," is undoubtedly the son of Mary Thorne and Frank Gresham. And it is a tonic to hear Hiram's Hospital mentioned again. The story

of the two heroines is thoroughly Trollopian and Barcastrian, though the clerical element is slight. Emily Greenmantle's father, the bank manager, opposes his daughter's marriage to Philip Hughes on social and financial grounds. On the other side of the tracks Hickory Peppercorn, the brewer, for similar reasons opposes the marriage of his daughter Polly to Jack Hollycombe, the malt salesman. The ambitious fathers are of course frustrated by the determined young lovers, who enlist the friendly aid of Dr. Freeborn, the rector, who invites the families and the suitors to Christmas dinner. The warmth of this happy occasion quickly thaws the parental prejudices. How does Trollope succeed so beautifully here when "The Lady of Launay," with a similar plot, was such a melancholy failure? Because, I think, this is not serious drama but comedy. Neither author nor characters take the story seriously. There is a conspiracy among all involved to step through the routines solemnly but with a twinkle of amusement at the deception. One fully expects that, as in an Elizabethan comedy, the characters will join hands at the conclusion and dance off the stage to hymeneal music. It is all very gay and lighthearted and frivolous. One regrets that Trollope did not more often tell his love story tongue-in-cheek.

So much of the work of Trollope's later years is labored and tedious that it is cheering to find him writing in *The Two Heroines* with something of his former vitality and charm. The old mill horse turned back to the pasture will kick up his stiff heels at the smell of familiar fields. So Barsetshire revisited must have stirred a host of memories in the mind of the failing novelist and revived for a moment the grace of earlier days. In one of his late letters Trollope told Arthur Tilley that there is not a passage in *Barchester Towers* which he did not remember: "The writer never forgets."<sup>71</sup> One can imagine that as he placed his two heroines in Barsetshire, he saw once more Septimus Harding standing unhappily in the quad of Hiram's Hospital as the archdeacon made his ringing speech to the bedesmen; Mrs. Proudie rising in terrible wrath against Bertie Stanhope when at the reception her gown is torn; Doctor Thorne throwing about his brother's child the protection of his love; Lucy Roberts, in the inexorableness of her pride, bending Lady Lufton

to her will; Johnny Eames settling his score with Adolphus Crosbie on the railway platform; and, perhaps most vividly, Josiah Crawley effectively silencing at last the bishop's wife.

### *Other Novels with a Clerical Element*

It is not only in the Barsetshire novels, however, that Trollope presses on clerical matters. Having discovered a subject which he could treat lightly and gracefully, and which readers found of continuing interest, he made it serve his changing purposes in half a dozen other novels. In none of these, perhaps, is the atmosphere as pervasively ecclesiastical as it is in the Barsetshire series, and the treatment of clerical material becomes increasingly severe. Often the dissenting chapel rather than the cathedral close is the setting, and bitter satire rather than amused tolerance is the tone of the frequent anti-evangelical passages. It is through these lesser known novels, however, that Trollope's religious prejudices emerge most clearly. It might be well, therefore, to glance at the most important of these, noting both their general characteristics and the extent to which the clerical scenes and characters contribute to the basic narrative designs.

The first in this group is *Rachel Ray*, a novel which until recently has had few admirers. In 1863 even the *Saturday Review*, whose critic had been partial to Trollope to the extent of admiring *The Bertrams*, could find little to praise in *Rachel Ray*. Critics of the early twentieth century continued to take a skeptical view. Algar Thorold, in an introduction to a new edition,<sup>72</sup> thought it inferior Trollope. Escott thought it less worthy of republication than *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*.<sup>73</sup> Both writers, it becomes clear as one reads, are troubled chiefly by the satire on Evangelicalism, which they take much too seriously. Escott is disturbed by the propriety of Trollope's "attack" and apparently dismayed by the "unrelieved bitterness" of the "sectarian strictures." The novel illustrates Trollope's "inveterate and violent antipathies to certain manifestations of the religious spirit in individuals and in daily conduct."<sup>74</sup> Even

some contemporary observers take this view. The Geroulds summarize the novel as "A Trollopian tirade against Evangelicalism."<sup>75</sup>

The Rev. Samuel Prong and Mrs. Dorothea Prime, to whose hand (or purse) Mr. Prong aspires, are both sanctimonious prigs, and they are presented on the level of caricature, as we have seen, precisely as are Mr. Slope and Mrs. Proudie. The stage is somewhat narrower here and less crowded. Consequently the actors seem rather larger. But it is difficult to see how critics who had no objection to *Barchester Towers* on this score could logically complain about *Rachel Ray*. Both stories are comedies of manners, where liberties with strict realism are not only excusable, they are part of the comic and satiric method. There can be no greater critical folly than to approach a seriocomic work as though it were a tract for the times. To be so regarded has been the unhappy fate of *Rachel Ray*. For many critics a delightfully whimsical story has been lost in preoccupation with the satire on sectarian narrowness.

Hugh Walpole, however, himself a chronicler of the comedy of church teas and village gossips and rural romances, has lost none of it. In *Rachel Ray* he finds the temper and spirit of Jane Austen. Indeed, the creator of Mrs. Norris, Fanny Price, and the Rev. William Collins would have been delighted with Baslehurst as a microcosm of that greater world (so we delude ourselves) in which we take part. The novel lives not because of its satire, which is often somewhat dingy, but because of its exquisite comedy. There are two incomparably brilliant sketches—the Tappitts' ball and the electors' banquet. Jane Austen could have done the first as well, or better, but the second is all Trollope. I cannot think that anyone who likes nineteenth-century social comedy in fiction will fail to find reading of the pleasantest kind in *Rachel Ray*. I hesitate to use the word "great" to describe anything so simple and unpretentious, but from beginning to end *Rachel Ray* is an infinite delight.

It was not so, however, to the *Saturday* reviewer, whose comment goes to the heart of the objection to nineteenth-century realism. What is wanted, he tells us, is something more significant than scenes from provincial life, which may be true enough but which are wearisome.



It may seem rather hard that critics should read Mr. Trollope's novels and enjoy them, and then abuse them for what they are. But this is, we believe, the exact combination of feelings which they would awaken in many minds. They are entertaining and very clever, but there is a satiety attending not only Mr. Trollope's representations of ordinary life, but all such representations, whoever may be the author. We wish fiction would do something for us besides giving us these accurate likenesses of the common run of those we see or know.<sup>76</sup>

This is very interesting, for it illustrates the pressure that was exerted upon the novelists to indulge the widespread Victorian taste for sensationalism. The argument had been beautifully met by George Eliot a few years before in chapter xvii of *Adam Bede*, but the battle had obviously not been won. Just six days before the publication of the *Saturday's* review Trollope had sent George Eliot a copy of *Rachel Ray*, with a letter in which he shows that his rejection of sensationalism and adoption of the most prosaic events as the material of fiction was consciously undertaken.

You know that my novels are not sensational. In *Rachel Ray* I have attempted to confine myself absolutely to the commonest details of commonplace life among the most ordinary people, allowing myself no incident that would be even remarkable in every day life. I have shorn my fiction of all romance.<sup>77</sup>

The next novel in this group, *Miss Mackenzie* (1865), is very inferior Trollope. It *can* be read—there are a few good things in it—but there is little sustained pleasure in the reading. One's curiosity is piqued sufficiently to carry through dreary areas of flaccid and nerveless writing, but in mid-course one often counts the number of pages that lie ahead. Such interest as the novel has is to be found in a curious Trollopian experiment in story material and in another contorted drawing of an evangelical community.

Everyone knows that Trollope undertook *Miss Mackenzie* to prove that a novel can be written without love, but that having taken for his heroine a most unattractive old maid overwhelmed by money troubles, he broke down in his purpose and married her off to a widower with nine children.<sup>78</sup> If in making this concession of a

wintry romance Trollope became convinced that love is indispensable, he deceived himself most unfortunately. *Miss Mackenzie* is hardly a good laboratory for such a theory. The anemic little narrative cried out for an immediate blood transfusion, else it should have died, and Trollope could think of no other way to revive it. The mistake was not in the theory, but in the weakness of the patient. Love could have been omitted from *Barchester Towers* with great advantage to the unity, and to the driving interest, of the narrative. It has little or no relevance in the lasting appeal of *The Last Chronicle of Barset*. And it does not exist in such a fine novel as *Orley Farm*. *Miss Mackenzie* is simply a weak novel, and Trollope was tragically misled if he thought that his experience proved anything—except that a bad novel should be scrapped. The tragedy lies in the implication that a man whose imagination transcended the requirements of lending-library love stories was convinced by his failure in this experiment that conventional romance is the sustaining element in fiction.

Since *Miss Mackenzie* does not pretend to offer either an attractive plot or a significant interpretation of a basic problem, such strength as it has must be found in the characters. The difficulties of social adjustment which the spinster must make should offer the novelist capital opportunities, but Trollope's evocation of Margaret Mackenzie is too hazy and insubstantial for effective characterization. The spirit of the novel rests entirely in those who play complementary and subsidiary parts. It is here that Trollope, in a measure, rescues his novel by setting up a group of amusing scenes from clerical society. There is the Rev. Mr. Stumfold, another Evangelical clergyman, whose mortal enemies are card-playing and dancing, horse-racing and hunting. He is not, however, simply a *réchauffé* of Slope and Prong by way of Stiggins and Chadband, for he is the jolly type of cleric, titillating the ladies with his rakish treatment of the Scriptures, and moving them with the eloquence of that voice of the shawm and twenty-stringed lute. And there is also Mr. Stumfold's curate, the Rev. Jeremiah Maguire, very eager to share Miss Mackenzie's worldly goods. Miss Mackenzie is deterred from encouraging him both by his squint and by the impossi-

bility of his given name, Jerry being so unclerical, even for private use, and Jeremiah so impracticable. Mr. Maguire's libellous letter to the Littlebath *Christian Examiner*, in which Trollope 'hits off' beautifully the charlatanries of the press, and his relations with Mrs. Stumfold, known in some circles as La Stumfolda, would be good things in anyone's novel. So would be Miss Todd and Miss Baker, who are resurrected from *The Bertrams* and prove to be very likely wraiths, if such a term be not ridiculous when applied to such considerable ladies. And one cherishes the memory of John Ball, the careworn, family-ridden man of business whose head is kept above those terrible financial waters only by a director's fee from the Shadrach Fire Office and the Abednego Life Office.

But a portrait gallery does not make a novel, and there is little else in *Miss Mackenzie*. Aside from those amusing persons whom I have named, the reader is faced with linked dreariness long drawn out. *Miss Mackenzie* is Trollope *manqué*.

*Nina Balatka* (1867) and *Linda Tressel* (1868), given a continental setting, allow Trollope to comment at length on non-Protestant faiths. Again, we find him eager to approve sincerity and humility whatever its denominational label, and quick to denounce bigotry and intolerance whatever its pious pretensions.

Some of the qualities of *Nina Balatka* have been commented on earlier.<sup>79</sup> It remains to consider the novel in general terms and with reference to *Linda Tressel*, the second of the anonymous novelettes. These two "foreign" stories, dear to Trollope's heart though they were, must be given up as failures. To explain the aberration which caused him to enter upon a foolish experiment in an utterly uncongenial and inappropriate style and manner, much has been written, particularly by the Stebbinses, who refuse to accept his statement that he wished to see how much of his success was owing to his name rather than his merits as a novelist. Since there is no evidence, I do not wish to enter the argument, except to point out that Trollope was quite willing to continue the experiment with *Linda Tressel* and *The Golden Lion of Granpère* after *Nina Balatka*, which sold fewer than 500 copies in the first six months after publication, had proved a publishing failure. I take this to indicate that his first

consideration was not money. Whatever his reasons were, the attempt and not the deed confounded him. He did not succeed in establishing a new literary personality. But he clung to the illusion that he had written two good books, asserting twice in the *Autobiography* his certainty of their merit.<sup>80</sup> He thought he had proved that the indiscriminating public bought novels only by well-known authors; he simply would not face the alternative that the stories were unpopular because they are poor.

And poor they are, though something can be said for *Nina Balatka* as a story with a well-maintained atmosphere of sullen, lowering hatred and suspicion. However, the pathos which Trollope thought he had created is largely dissipated in the unreality of the characters. This arises not so much from a sense of strangeness as from a stiff and artificial style. One has no difficulty in losing himself in *The Brothers Karamazov* or *Anna Karenina* or *War and Peace*, however remote from English life the psychology of its characters may be, but both *Nina Balatka* and *Linda Tressel* leave the reader a spectator at events which he cannot comprehend sympathetically. Trollope worked hard over the local color and was proud to think that his Prague and Nuremberg are recognizable. But he would have been better advised to forget the descriptive background and concentrate on helping the reader to understand and enter into the social and moral problems of the characters. It is difficult to do this here because Trollope's attempt to establish a Middle European temper takes the form of a heavy, stilted, slightly archaic style, as of an academic translation. This is unfortunate because in *Nina Balatka* the two chief problems, the conflict between love and family-religious ties, and between love and property, need not be given, and indeed are not given, a hackneyed treatment. If the diction is consciously chosen for effect, it is nonetheless turgid and declamatory. That "charm and freshness" which Walpole notes,<sup>81</sup> I do not find at all.

Trollope also errs, it seems to me, in withholding from the characters of both novels any moment of ordinary cheerfulness. Tragedy is a familiar aspect of existence, but even in the unhappiest lives some lighter hours are permitted. Indeed, tragedy can scarcely be

meaningful except by virtue of a contrast between what might have been and what is. But these characters do not appear to have the capacity for joy. They wear the world's woes as well as their own. Nina is solemn throughout, and Anton is dour and saturnine, a most unattractive lover. As Trollope admitted to Blackwood, "the man comes out too black. I think I'll make him give her a diamond necklace in the last chapter."<sup>82</sup> The "happy" ending which may have been the result of this observation while the novel was appearing serially<sup>83</sup> (Trollope continued to think of the book as a tragedy<sup>84</sup>) in no way relieves the atmosphere of gloom. In *Linda Tressel* the aura of frustration and despair is even heavier, and finally becomes not overpowering but stultifying as the novel moves to its sentimental deathbed finale.

Nina always has a chance, one feels, of breaking out of the chrysalis of intolerance and repression in which she is encased, but Linda is defeated from the outset, both by the force of malign and uncontrollable circumstance and by the perverted religiosity of her aunt Frau Staubach. Trollope here develops one of his favorite themes: the evil of family interference in spontaneous and healthy love, particularly when it takes its origin in a narrow and bigoted Evangelicalism parading as the higher morality. Frau Staubach is represented as an Anabaptist, a good woman after her own lights, but with no sweetness of spirit. Her relentless, misguided theology has made her see evil in every pleasure, indulgence in every form of happiness, waywardness in every deviation from creedal authority. At first Linda maintains her independence. When she expresses her disgust at the withered, goatish suitor Aunt Charlotte has selected for her, Frau Staubach remarks, "You should not allow yourself to feel what you call disgust at any of God's creatures. Have you ever thought who made Herr Steinmarc?"<sup>85</sup> To which Linda replies, "God made Judas Iscariot, aunt Charlotte." But after Linda elopes with her cousin Ludovic Valcarm and is apprehended in innocent but embarrassing circumstances she is disarmed and at the mercy of her aunt's persecution.<sup>86</sup> Only when she flees to the home of her Uncle Grüner, who is a Roman Catholic, does she receive understanding treatment. But by that time, it is too late.

The Stebbinses say that the treatment of religion in *Nina Balatka* indicates that Trollope was "very cross with Christians."<sup>87</sup> If valid against *Nina Balatka*, this charge would be doubly valid against *Linda Tressel*. But it is true only in a very limited sense. He is showing irritation against religious bigotry and against narrow sectarianism, as he always did. Some Protestant groups, he felt, were guilty of perverting Christian ideals. The Jews and the Catholics are portrayed in a softer, kindlier light than are the Protestants, but Trollope is merely preaching religious tolerance, not arguing the blessings of any religion. In England Catholics and Jews were minority religious groups, and perhaps scorned by some of the thoughtless. In Prague and Nuremberg Protestants were the minority group. To bring Protestantism to the bar and arraign it for bigotry under such circumstances of reversed situation is to teach the lesson of tolerance very effectively. Trollope never had anything but affection for his own church, but the excesses of a withering sectarianism he fought bitterly.

The questions raised by these two little books are not without interest, but the books themselves, to use a Trollopian phrase, fall to the ground. What is meant to be poignant is merely strident—and there is nothing else.

A few years later Trollope wrote a third little continental novel, *The Golden Lion of Granpère* (1872), a sunny summer idyll of airy inconsequentiality. In it he returns briefly to the religious problems which had concerned him in the two earlier books. Michael Voss, the stern parent, is a Protestant, but his second wife and her niece are Roman Catholics. This causes little difficulty because:

He troubled himself very little with the doctrinal differences, having no slightest touch of an idea that he was to be saved because he was a Protestant, and that they were in peril because they were Roman Catholics. Nor, indeed, was there any such idea on either side prevalent in the valley. What M. le Curé himself may have believed, who can say? But he never taught his parishioners that their Protestant uncles and wives and children were to be damned.<sup>88</sup>

Here Trollope pictures the state of benign tolerance and understanding which men must cultivate if they are to be civilized.

*The Vicar of Bullhampton* (1870) is misleadingly titled. It is not the vicar, Frank Fenwick, whom one remembers, but Carry Brattle and, perhaps, Mary Lowther. There are in this novel two quite independent plots; and though the vicar does not bring them together, for they scarcely impinge, he is a unifying force, providing the slight bridge by which they are tenuously connected. The clerical atmosphere of the novel is developed not around the vicar, but around the Puddlehamites, an evangelical community.

It is very clear from Trollope's preface<sup>89</sup> to this book that he thought Carry would attract most attention and, indeed, become a controversial figure. The "castaway," as in deference to the current concept of good taste he termed the prostitute, had not often been made an important character in a Victorian novel, especially by a writer who consciously set for his task "the amusement of the young of both sexes."<sup>90</sup> Wilkie Collins' *The New Magdalen* was not published until three years later. The response of the press, however, did not confirm Trollope's fears, and it is likely that had the preface not emphasized the moral problem little notice would have been taken of it. Reviews which did comment on the preface usually called it a "needless apology."<sup>91</sup> In such matters Trollope was likely to err on the timid side.

Habitual readers of Trollope might be expected to take an interest in the Brattles if only in defense against the ennui of the love trio and the vulgarity of the Puddlehamites. Once again and yet once more we are asked to contemplate the plight of a girl who cannot marry the man of her choice because both lack money, and who therefore engages herself to a colorless squire whom she does not care for. All comes square, of course, when the favored lover inherits an unexpected fortune; and we can presumably forgive Mary, who, having warned the foolish squire that his rights and privileges were revocable without notice, is not technically a jilt. There is nothing here that can hold the attention of anyone who has met the basic plot situation a dozen times before. Mary is no doubt charming and intelligent in a very English way. Walter Marrable, if like too many of Trollope's heroes indefatigably concerned with who is going to give him some money, is nevertheless agreeable. And

Harry Gilmore, if not so inane, might have been an interesting study in futility and frustration. Trollope errs in waiting until late in the story to stir up some sympathy for him. But all these characters are subject to the dry rot of familiarity. Trollope admits in the *Autobiography* that he has forgotten what the heroine does.

The Puddlehamites, on the other hand, are at least lively. Primitive Methodists are not presented by Trollope as an attractive sect, being distinguished for a hypersensitive moral sense and an underdeveloped aesthetic sense. Mr. Puddleham himself is remarkable for "the intensity of his ignorance." But they know what they want, and they are amusingly devoted to their errors. This part of the narrative again illustrates Trollope's short ways with the dissenters, but his partisanship takes such humorous turns that one could hardly wish him more broadminded. Nevertheless, the student who is interested in form and structure in the novel will inevitably question the relevance of the whole Puddleham episode. The spreading plot is such a staple of Victorian fiction that it is useless to search for its origin, but I cannot help feeling that for Trollope this inheritance from as far back as the eighteenth century was encouraged by his wide reading in the early drama, where subplotting is virtually a law. How could Trollope justify on the score of unity and balance an entire chapter devoted to a portrait of Richard Quickenham, Q.C., whose connection with the Puddleham dispute is of the thinnest?

If Trollope despised the raucous enthusiasm and deplored the lack of aesthetic appreciation among the evangelicals, he was quick to condemn uncharitable and unforgiving attitudes by members of his own faith. *The Vicar of Bullhampton* scores both weaknesses. The Marquis of Trowbridge in order to annoy the vicar gives to the Puddlehamites a piece of land opposite the vicarage gate on which is shortly begun a hideous chapel. The Marquis has been angered because the vicar will not support his movement to have the Brattles evicted from the parish. Jacob Brattle may be "cross-grained, litigious, moody and tyrannical," but he is a "hard-working, sober, honest man." To punish a God-fearing father for the sins of his children is to show less regard for the essence of Christianity than emerges from the absurdities of evangelical discipline. It is



primarily in his handling of all aspects of organized religion that Trollope proves himself both a deft satirist and a sincere Christian.

But it is to the Brattles and the vicar that we must turn if we are to support the enthusiasm for this novel shown by many critics. Carry Brattle is presented with delicacy and understanding; her story has a pathos that is never bogus. Mrs. Brattle is a fine figure of a sympathetic mother—patient, loving, self-denying. But old Jacob Brattle is the triumph—a hard-crust, moody fellow, sharp, bitter, tyrannical, unforgiving, yet suffering unspoken tortures for his own harshness. Henry James calls him “an excellent English portrait.”<sup>92</sup>

As for the vicar, he is developed with surety and skill. Escott's suggestion<sup>93</sup> that Fenwick is Trollope in orders is close to the mark. He is a representative, at any rate, of Christian socialism, of muscular Christianity—not over-hearty, back-slapping, and offensive, but quiet and dignified, with a twinkle when humor is most efficacious and an awesome firmness when, as in the matter of the Marquis' revenge, determination is called for. This is a new kind of clerical character for Trollope, one whom we should like to see more of. But *The Vicar* is really not a clerical novel and Bullhampton is not Barchester.

Trollope's clerical novels were written chiefly in the 'sixties. In the 'seventies he was more interested in the social aspects of politics. But in 1881 he returned with considerable vigor to a characteristic story: a case of conscience (justice vs. public opinion) involving the careers of two clergymen. *Dr. Wortle's School* is a welcome re-assertion of the old Trollope. The materials are not entirely new, but the handling is surprisingly bold and skillful.<sup>94</sup> The story is ostensibly that of the Rev. Henry Peacocke, who leaves Oxford to become vice-president of a college in St. Louis,<sup>95</sup> where he marries an American girl who believes that her brutish husband, Ferdinand Lefroy, is dead. As in *Castle Richmond* the despicable fellow turns up to shatter the happiness of the now distraught couple. They return to England, where Peacocke becomes an assistant master in a school operated by an able and generous clergyman, Dr. Jeffrey Wortle. Lefroy's brother soon appears and attempts blackmail, as rumors of the illegality of the Peacocke's marriage nearly ruin the school.

Ultimately, however, Peacocke travels to San Francisco and establishes the fact of Lefroy's recent death.

But nothing much is made of the Peacockes, who though bracingly honest are otherwise colorless and uninteresting. They merely provide an issue to draw out Dr. Wortle, who is the controlling figure of the novel. In a situation similar to that of *The Warden* (should a man resign a semi-public position because of gossip and criticism?) Dr. Wortle plays the same part of adviser and supporter as did Dr. Grantly, whom he resembles. We are told in the first sentence that Dr. Wortle "was a man much esteemed by others,—and by himself." But if he is headstrong and somewhat imperious he is kindly, generous, and notably tolerant. The sin with which the Peacockes are charged is much more serious than that which Mr. Harding faced (or even that which the Fitzgeralds faced in *Castle Richmond*, for they did not know that Matthew Mollet was alive), and Dr. Wortle puts his school in jeopardy by refusing to dismiss the unfortunate couple. It has often been pointed out that there is much of Anthony Trollope in Dr. Wortle—the same shrewdness, obstinacy, and hardheaded common sense. At any rate, in defending the Peacockes, who are admittedly living in adultery, Trollope-Wortle shows a boldness of which some years before he would not have been capable. That he was not unaware of the probable objections is indicated by a reassuring letter to Blackwood: "I think I have managed the question as to the marriage so as to give no offence."<sup>98</sup>

Dr. Wortle, then, does not produce the action, but he is the means by which it is interpreted. Trollope's techniques are normally so elementary and so conventional that there is nothing to be said about them. But in this instance (and possibly in *The Warden* as well) he has been most ingenious and quite modern. The characters are developed almost wholly in terms of their relationship to an event which does not immediately concern them. That is, by their reaction to Dr. Wortle's warm sponsorship of the erring Peacockes we learn of their intellectual and moral nature. The very way in which one expresses his approval or disapproval of Dr. Wortle is subtly revealing of that person's character and background. These

reactions provide the minute adjustments which bring the *dramatis personae* into focus.

It is depressing in the midst of so much that is challenging and original to find the first-rate Peacocke-Wortle story cheapened and weakened by a tiresome subplot. Dr. Wortle has a daughter, and so the inescapable love story cannot, as one had hoped, be avoided. Though Mary Wortle is a charming girl, I doubt that the most sympathetic reader has ever expressed any interest in whether or not she marries Lord Carstairs. One must rebut Walpole's assertion that *Dr. Wortle's School* "is never unduly prolonged and has not a moment's dullness."<sup>97</sup> But it is a strong, intelligently written novel. Few may wish to go so far as the Stebbinses, who say that the reunion between the school boys and their reinstated master "surpassed, in its simplicity and fidelity, the conclusion of *The Brothers Karamazov*,"<sup>98</sup> but fewer still will finish *Dr. Wortle's School* with any thought other than that the author was an artist.

In Trollope's earliest novels the clerical sketches are drawn merely to exhibit amusing profiles. Father John McGrath, a ridiculous butterball of a man, exerts his quick intelligence in the interests of his parishioners, and lightens the bleak atmosphere of Ballycloran with his natural *bonhomie* and perpetual good humor. Mr. Armstrong, the hunting parson of *The Kellys*, who more frequently plays the part of the hunted, dodges irate tradesmen in a losing battle to maintain his slatternly family. These are characters from a comedy of humours. But beginning with *The Warden* Trollope made the clergymen the focus of a moral issue or idea. From Septimus Harding in 1855 to Jeffrey Wortle in 1881 he lost few opportunities to use the clerical scene effectively both as background for conventional plots and as foreground for the simple ethics in which he delighted.

### 3 TOWN AND COUNTRY ❧

#### *Trollope and Society: Politics and Public Affairs*

CHARLES DICKENS could not understand why Trollope coveted a Parliamentary seat. He wrote to Tom Trollope, "Anthony's ambition [to become a candidate for Beverley] is inscrutable to me."<sup>1</sup> Dickens had himself declined to sit for Reading, and he might have been pardoned for failing to understand why Thackeray wanted to contest Oxford; but to be baffled by Anthony Trollope's political interests is not to know him at all. Trollope was never satisfied to be merely a novelist. His wide-ranging curiosity, his active awareness of people and things, drove him out of the study and into the street. Literature did not entirely absorb his tremendous vitality, and he found fragments of time and energy at his disposal. How might these best be employed? He suggests in the *Autobiography* that he chose to stand for Parliament because a sarcastic uncle had intimated years before that Post Office clerks do not become political leaders. Perhaps the pleasure of proving Henry Milton a bad prophet was not altogether lost on Trollope as he made his decision for candidacy, but surely the real motivation was neither so frivolous nor so childish. We know from repeated statements that Trollope thought that "to sit in the British Parliament should be the highest object of ambition to every educated Englishman."<sup>2</sup> This was not a casual opinion but the bedrock foundation of his concept of useful citizenship. The literary life is well and good—Trollope did not feel

called upon to apologize for it (though he did on many occasions emphasize its serious purposes); but the proper study of mankind is politics. It was the credo of *St. Pauls* that "of all the studies to which men and women can attach themselves, that of politics is the first and the finest. . . ." <sup>3</sup> The author of the "Parliamentary Novels" did not drift into his subject by chance. His first published writing was a series of articles on social and political conditions in Ireland, and almost his last completed work was his life of Palmerston. The science of government, particularly as it had developed in his own country, was a matter of lifelong interest. In the novels, of course, he chose to emphasize the human side of English political life, but the desire to be himself a part of the chief legislative body of the land was no inexplicable vagary.

One might expect that the recent recovery of Trollope's election campaign speeches at Beverley would be helpful in defining accurately his political position,<sup>4</sup> but unfortunately such is not the case. Today's reader will find his sentiments general and pedestrian, and his words cold and uninspiring. Escott quotes some of Trollope's associates in the unhappy venture to the effect that the novelist created a fine impression, delighting "without exception, and on both sides, his Beverley audiences by the sonorous delivery of virile periods, clothing in clear and terse phrases thoughts that were the condensed essence of practical wisdom and shrewd insight."<sup>5</sup> Those who so reported must have been carried away by their partiality for the novelist. There is not the slightest evidence, among the published speeches at any rate, that he was anything but a most indifferent campaigner, full of the platitudes of electioneering and evincing a surprisingly patronizing attitude toward the workmen who comprised the bulk of the Beverley electorate.

Since these addresses tell us little more than that Trollope was a staunch Liberal, a loyal follower of Gladstone, a strong supporter of education, and an ardent advocate of the disestablishment of the Irish Church, it might be better to examine his political philosophy in the published essays and in the novels. It should be said first, however, that Trollope would not have made a good party man. His sense of obedience to the interest of policy would have been shock-

ingly weak, for it is not to be supposed that he would put party discipline above principles. In *The Three Clerks* he expresses his contempt for the shoddy political motives of expediency which alone, he thought, could explain Sir Robert Peel's inconsistencies.

It has been shown above<sup>6</sup> that Trollope took a melioristic view of society. He thus ranged himself squarely against Carlyle, Ruskin, and other criers of doom. Oddly enough, however, he was once of the melancholy fraternity himself. His early novel *The New Zealander* (1855), the title of which is drawn from the famous prophecy of doom in Macaulay's essay on Ranke, has not been published, but we have the report from William Longman's reader that "the author goes through all the leading influences and institutions of the State and pours out the vial of his wrath upon them. . . . All the good points in the work have already been treated by Mr. Carlyle, of whose *Latter-Day Pamphlets* this work, both in style and matter, is a most feeble imitation."<sup>7</sup> The *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, one recalls, takes a very gloomy view of man's inability to manage his affairs intelligently. Universal suffrage Carlyle seems to regard as only a prelude to universal suffering; philanthropy is a sentimental delusion; politicians are a set of egregious opportunists; and only a benevolent dictatorship can save England from complete chaos. But thirteen years later in his "Essay on Carlylism" Trollope reflected a very different state of mind, holding that one need not attend the Prophet's trumpet of doom, for have not "high hearts, and pure spirits, and neighbourly love, with patriotism and philanthopy, increased among us?"<sup>8</sup> Leibnitz to the contrary notwithstanding, this is not the best of all possible worlds; but the principle of good exists. It waits only for realization through the agency of representative men.

What had occurred to bring about this sharp reversal of Trollope's political and moral philosophy? One suspects that the rapid development of his social and material prosperity, consequent on the maturing of his genius, provoked a fundamental change in outlook. In 1855 Trollope was still an apprentice writer, friendless and unknown. Though *The Warden* had been published, it had failed to sell. In 1868 he was a distinguished novelist, enormously successful,

and at the very height of his career. It is no doubt all but impossible to convince the man who has risen from poverty to affluence, from social ostracism to a membership in the Athenaeum Club, that the affairs of the world are preposterously managed. Such a man will not be told that his country is deteriorating, and that the battle against ignorance and selfishness is hopeless. He will stoutly defend the principle of improvement in an imperfect world. This is the meliorist's position.

We have it on Trollope's own authority that he used the Parliamentary novels for the expression of his political and social convictions: "They have served me as safety-valves by which to deliver my soul."<sup>9</sup> A general study of these books, and a particular study of the character of Plantagenet Palliser, will indicate to what extent Trollope was the advanced Conservative-Liberal he claimed to be. In examining English history or in assessing the temper of the British national mind many observers have noted a strong disposition toward self-criticism and reform, checked at virtually every point by a distaste for violence and a reluctance to circumvent or abandon tradition. The result has been a tendency to modify existing agencies and institutions rather than to substitute new ones. The political philosophy of the novels everywhere bears out this national inclination.

Plantagenet Palliser, that "very noble gentleman,"<sup>10</sup> might seem to epitomize Trollope's social ideals rather than his political ideals; but it is worth while to note that with Trollope things social and political are very closely allied. In fact, they are merely two aspects of the same thing. In *Can You Forgive Her?* Mr. Palliser is described in terms of high approbation.

Mr. Palliser was one of those politicians in possessing whom England has perhaps more reason to be proud than of any other of her resources, and who, as a body, give to her that exquisite combination of conservatism and progress which is her present strength and best security for the future.<sup>11</sup>

It is clear, as the Parliamentary series develops, that the author purposes to draw a character whose devotion to his country, on

principle, and to the responsibility of enlightened citizenship is such that he is the embodiment of Trollope's political idealism.

He was an upright, thin, laborious man; who by his parts alone could have served no political party materially, but whose parts were sufficient to make his education, integrity, and industry useful in the highest degree. It is the trust which such men inspire that makes them so serviceable. . . .<sup>12</sup>

Plantagenet Palliser is also the justification of Trollope's social conservatism. He is a representative of the best traditions of the English aristocracy. There is no doubt that Trollope conceived the entire series of Parliamentary novels, in part at least, as an expression of his faith in the stratification of British society and in the civic contribution of the upper class. It will be observed that there is no attempt to dramatize and glorify the nobility. This restraint is, of course, to Trollope's credit as an interpreter of human nature.

In these personages and their friends, political and social, I have endeavoured to depict the faults and frailties and vices,—as also the virtues, the graces, and the strength of our highest classes; and if I have not made the strength and virtues predominant over the faults and vices, I have not painted the picture I intended.<sup>13</sup>

In spite of his admiration for the public spirit of the more useful aristocrats, however, Trollope never lost sight of the central position of the commoner in British political life. It may well have been this certainty which reinforced his decision to stand for Parliament himself. Morris Edmund Speare, the most recent historian of the political novel, has pointed out that "if Trollope held a brief for anything in the political world it was his faith in the commoner as a coming benign influence in English political affairs."<sup>14</sup>

If social life seems to impinge very heavily on political life in the Parliamentary novels, it is probably because these books are not really "political" at all. That is, Trollope's purposes were quite different from Disraeli's. In his preface to *Coningsby* Disraeli explained that:

It was not originally the intention of the writer to adopt the form of fiction as the instrument to scatter his suggestions, but, after reflection, he re-



solved to avail himself of a method which, in the temper of the times, offered the best chance of influencing opinion. . . . The main purpose of its writer was to vindicate the just claims of the Tory party to be the popular political confederation.

*Coningsby* is a failure as a novel precisely because it is too political. The expository material is imperfectly assimilated. Trollope does not make this mistake, for he is not writing a propaganda tract. It is likely, by the way, that the name Parliamentary Novels as applied to the Palliser books has done Trollope some harm, since it directs the reader's attention toward purposes which the author never pursued. The term "Parliamentary Novels" was never used by Trollope, and the Oxford University Press was fully justified when in its recent "Illustrated Trollope" edition it substituted the term "Palliser Novels."

Wherever Trollope went—Italy, Australia, the United States, South Africa, Iceland, the Sandwich Isles—he showed the keenest interest in how the people governed themselves. His travel books bulge with encyclopaedic information on political matters that could not possibly be of wide interest. Many readers of *North America*, for example, objected to the four or five chapters devoted to a full exposition of the organization of the federal and state governments in the United States.<sup>15</sup> Trollope must have known that such material could be meaningful for only a few of his readers, and that those few, trained in the science of government, could easily find this information elsewhere. Yet he himself was so vitally interested in political facts and statistics that he could not understand how dull they would be for others. For himself, he was never happier than when arguing his interpretation of the writ of *habeas corpus* in transatlantic correspondence with Richard Henry Dana, an authority on constitutional law, or when debating with Australian cabinet ministers the problems of colonial administration.

No one, I believe, can know the mind of Anthony Trollope who has not studied his travel books. Wherever he went he put out his tentacles in every direction and grasped what was most salient in the life of the community. Most men of letters turned tourist keep a vigilant eye cocked for the striking in scenery, the odd in character, the dramatic incident. But Trollope, though not unaware of

the appeal of a colorful, anecdotal approach, was chiefly interested in describing how a society was organized—politically, economically, and culturally. It is said that when Henry Adams visited Ceylon he sat for half an hour under the shoot of Buddha's bo-tree. Trollope had probably never heard of Buddha's bo-tree, but he leaves little to be said about the history of the coffee industry.<sup>16</sup>

Other sources of information on the breadth of Trollope's interests are his public addresses and his articles for newspapers and journals. Some of the lectures and speeches, those which Trollope undoubtedly gave several times, were published by Morris L. Parrish. A few others are recorded; of these at least two survive in manuscript and one is known only by title. The subjects of most of these lectures are those on which Trollope's experience particularly qualified him to express opinions: the American Civil War, the Civil Service, Prose Fiction, Education, the Zulus. Occasionally, as in his lecture on the higher education of women, he expresses merely a cross-grained prejudice. From time to time he appeared on the platform at important public meetings. Thomas Hardy was in the audience on one memorable occasion when the Duke of Westminster, as chairman, tugged in vain on Trollope's coattails after he had exceeded his allotted speaking time. This was at the National Conference of the Eastern Question Association on December 8, 1876.<sup>17</sup> Lord Bryce, who also was present, described Trollope as a "direct and forcible speaker, who would have made his way had he entered Parliament."<sup>18</sup>

During the years 1865-68 Trollope was actively interested in George Smith's *Pall Mall Gazette*. The list of subjects which he proposed<sup>19</sup> has nearly as much interest as the score of articles which he actually wrote. In this latter category are papers on Lord Brougham, on Lord Westbury, or Lord John Russell, on American conditions, on Prevost Parodel, on the St. Albans Raiders, on church endowments, on clerks and usurers, on various new books, etc.<sup>20</sup> His mill would keep turning, and it required a lot of grist. He wrote regularly in 1865-66 for the *Fortnightly Review*, which he had founded, and in 1867-69 for the *St. Pauls*, which he edited.

It would be hazardous to suggest a subject on which Trollope would not have an opinion. Sometimes the opinion would derive

from mere prejudice, and sometimes it would be backed by only the shallowest experience. There were great gaps in his learning: he knew very little of foreign languages and literatures, he was notably deficient in philosophy, and his science was the most elementary. But on politics and public affairs he was more than an informed layman. With his shrewd eye, his quick understanding, and his capacious memory he was a close student of nineteenth-century life.

In his social and political thinking he chose the middle course between optimism and pessimism. He would not join the professional cynics and cry "havoc," but he had seen too much of the nether world to accept a shallow Godwinian optimism. He was not a militant meliorist. In spite of his love of argument he was usually content merely to state his case, rarely (except for the sport of it) assuming a dogmatic pose. He would not have added his voice to the song of those extremists who gathered at Crotchet Castle:

.                   Not a scheme in agitation  
                    For the world's amelioration  
                    Has a grain of sense in it, except my own.

Against nineteenth-century extremes he offered a steady rationalism, holding that the palpable evils of the world are susceptible of alleviation by the exercise of intelligence.

The Palliser novels, which are discussed in the following pages, represent Trollope's attempt to objectify much of his social and political thinking. By means of a portrait of a large segment of English society—the statesmen, major and minor, and their circle—he identified and commented on salient qualities of the national character. In town and country, on Parliament benches and manor house lawns, he studied the English way of life; and he preserved its characteristic features in the rich amber of his imagination.

### *The Palliser Novels*

There are some very good things in Hugh Walpole's careless<sup>21</sup> monograph on Trollope. The remark that "When we have finished the

Barsetshire novels we are vastly wiser about Barsetshire, but only a little wiser about ourselves,"<sup>22</sup> is perceptive. It is not often that Trollope looks deeply into man's heart and attempts to study the basic, primary emotions. He renders the surface of living with admirable fidelity to observed experience, and he is therefore one of our cherished social historians. But his shallow dredging of felt experience does not lay bare much of what is inexpressible. He must therefore be forever excluded from the company of first-rate creative artists.

If so much must be conceded against the author of the Barsetshire novels, generally considered his best work, what can be said for the Palliser novels?<sup>23</sup> A good deal, in fact, though judgment has been mixed. Trollope himself, justly proud of the consistent development of Plantagenet and Lady Glencora, was pleased with the series: "I look upon this string of characters . . . as the best work of my life."<sup>24</sup> Henry James, after several attempts, decided that the "political novels are distinctly dull, and I confess I have not been able to read them."<sup>25</sup> Hugh Walpole felt that "no political novel written by Trollope or anyone else is so excellent as *Barchester Towers*."<sup>26</sup> Beatrice Curtis Brown, on the other hand, holds that the Barsetshire novels do not have "the stature of . . . the political novels. . . . They deal with what concerns the human day; but these others deal with what concerns human life."<sup>27</sup> There are perhaps several reasons for these disparate views, which I have found to be widespread among casual readers. In the first place, the scene and subject matter of the Palliser novels, insofar as they are political (and they are, of course, not political at all in the Disraelian sense), are of rather narrow interest. James cared nothing for political maneuvering, and an American, even though he be a dedicated Anglophile, finds it difficult to whip up great enthusiasm for the description of events whose nuances are unfamiliar and therefore largely lost. In the second place, the two series have each a different mood and tone. The Barsetshire novels are light, even gay, with few solemn moments until *The Last Chronicle*. The Palliser novels are sometimes dark, even gloomy, with plot situations that suggest tragic denouements left unfulfilled. One will react to these

different types in accordance with the literary and philosophical predispositions which he brings to them.

Readers should therefore be prepared for the bewildering reactions to *Can You Forgive Her?* (1864). As we have seen, Trollope thought that he had never done better work.<sup>28</sup> Escott emphasizes several times the "progress"<sup>29</sup> shown over the Basset comedy-narration, pointing out Trollope's bolder conception of woman and his "broader and deeper outlook upon the tragi-comedy of daily life."<sup>30</sup> Sadleir, by contrast, regards the novel as "awkward, sententious and discordantly episodic,"<sup>31</sup> with a plot that is much ado about nothing. Walpole cannot find anything good in the novel, where the subplot swallows the principal story, all of whose characters are "revolting." As for the question asked in the novel's title,<sup>32</sup> Alice Vavasor (whose name Walpole characteristically misspells throughout) is neither interesting enough nor alive enough for forgiveness or non-forgiveness to matter in the slightest. "She is one of the stickiest and most stupid in all the ranks of Trollope's heroines, and her lovers are as sticky as she."<sup>33</sup> The Stebbinses see in the novel "considerable intrinsic merit"<sup>34</sup> and regard the Pallisers as Trollope's "two greatest characters."<sup>35</sup> Miss Curtis Brown is impressed by Trollope's ability to describe both domestic and public scenes. No other English novelist can do this "with equal subtlety, humour, pathos and sense of drama."<sup>36</sup> Sir Edward Marsh thinks the main plot "one of Trollope's most elaborate and convincing studies of a complicated love-affair" and Alice an excellent character, "an exception to the run of his unmarried heroines."<sup>37</sup> Trollope thought the humorous characters (the Greenow-Bellfield-Cheeseacre plot) "well done . . . very good fun."<sup>38</sup> Everyone else has been excoriating in his criticism of the humor. In sum, it may be said that on few novels has opinion been so sharply divided.

There are a number of points of special interest about *Can You Forgive Her?* One is the relatively careful plotting. Normally given to spraying around subplots of unequal value and unequal relevance, Trollope here settles upon three stories moving in parallel. Each is of triangular form: a woman and two men. There is the plot of Alice Vavasor, George Vavasor, and John Grey; the plot of Lady

Glencora, Plantagenet Palliser, and Burgo Fitzgerald; and the plot of Mrs. Greenow, Capt. Bellfield, and Mr. Cheeseacre. The relationship between these plots is one of blood; Alice and Lady Glen are cousins—which is possible; and Alice is the niece of the vulgar Mrs. Greenow—which is impossible. In each of the first two plots one suitor is a quiet, modest, rather dull fellow of considerable ability, and the other dashing and worthless. In the third plot, which sets out to provide the comic relief, both suitors are worthless; at any rate, their interest in the worldly, well-endowed widow is wholly selfish.

Another point of interest is the nature of the feminine leads. Faithful readers of Trollope, accustomed to the soft sentimentalities of a Katie Woodward or even the quiet stubbornness of a Lily Dale must have been surprised by the heroines of *Can You Forgive Her?* Glencora is no wide-eyed innocent but a married woman whose roving eyes are attracted by the charms of an accomplished philanderer. Alice is no adolescent trembling before the realities of first significant human experience but a high-spirited young woman of independent means and independent habits. Trollope did not care for too much independence in women. Love of power is their ruling passion, and it inevitably brings by its exercise a fearful retribution. Both Lady Glencora and Alice are led by their wilfulness and self-assurance to the very edge of tragedy before persuasion and good fortune re-establish a durable situation. We are taught in this semi-problem novel that self-indulgence must yield to propriety and good sense. But unless Lady Glencora's subsequent life with her somewhat stiffish husband can be regarded as punishment, the ladies do not pay for their foolishness. Sadleir will not forgive Trollope this generous violation of poetic justice.<sup>39</sup> Certainly Lily Dale, a few months earlier, had been made to suffer her mistakes keenly. We can forgive Alice, but perhaps she should not have been permitted so easily to forgive herself.

A third, if minor, point of interest, having significant implications as it bears on Victorian morality, is the controversy which Trollope reports over Lady Glencora's alleged immoral conduct. We are told<sup>40</sup> that a clergyman wrote to Trollope protesting against the

scenes in which a married woman is shown to be tempted to elope with another man. This was apparently unforgivable. But the clergyman had not a word to say against two chapters in which prostitutes are prominently introduced. In chapter xxix Burgo buys a meal at a public house for a half-frozen, half-starved little street-walker who has picked him up, and in chapter lxxi George, on the point of leaving the country, gets rid of his mistress without giving her a shilling. One does not need to pinpoint the illogicality of the clergyman's thinking or elaborate on the twists and contortions of Victorian ethics.

A fourth, and important, point of interest, significant in an over-all appreciation of Trollope's accomplishment, may be considered here. It is his sense of time. Henry James thought that the novelist's attention to time is the most pressing as it is the most difficult of his responsibilities: "This eternal time question is . . . always there and always formidable";<sup>41</sup> ". . . that side of the novelist's effort—the side of most difficulty and thereby of most dignity . . . consists in giving the sense of duration, of the lapse and accumulation of time. This is altogether to my view the stiffest problem that the artist in fiction has to tackle."<sup>42</sup> In the twentieth century time-consciousness has become almost obsessive among serious novelists; I can find no evidence that in Trollope's day it even existed as a concept. Yet consider the following passage from the *Autobiography*:

In conducting these characters from one story to another I realised the necessity, not only of consistency,—which, had it been maintained by a hard exactitude, would have been untrue to nature,—but also of those changes which time always produces. There are, perhaps, but few of us who, after the lapse of ten years, will be found to have changed our chief characteristics. The selfish man will still be selfish, and the false man false. But our manner of showing or of hiding these characteristics will be changed,—as also our power of adding to or diminishing their intensity. It was my study that these people, as they grew in years, should encounter the changes which come upon us all; and I think that I have succeeded.<sup>43</sup>

I do not mean to suggest that Trollope is speaking of time precisely in the sense in which it was used by Proust and Conrad and Virginia

Woolf. I am sure that he would be quite appalled by such recent books as A. A. Mendilow's *Time and the Novel* and Hans Meyerhoff's *Time in Literature*. But in the quoted passage there is at least the recognition of a technical problem currently under discussion, and evidence that Trollope addressed himself consciously to its solution.

He had reason to be proud of his achievement, for it is at this point that the Palliser series shows a measure of significant advance over the Barsetshire series. The repeated characters *do* grow and develop and change. The Proudies and the warden and the archdeacon are static, permanently defined. Plantagenet and Lady Glencora are fluid, mobile, shaped by each other and by changing circumstances. It is not merely a matter of aging, though one has a sharp sense, as in *The Forsyte Saga*, of the sequence of years. It is a matter of foolish youngsters growing up, settling down, making what adjustments and compromises are necessary, watching the shining cloud-castles fade, pushing on, however, to less colorful but more substantial goals—children, grandchildren, death. Systole and diastole, ebb and flow—the human story. When our novelist can make us feel the passing decades in terms of basic character development, without hurry, without undue compression, without gaping interstices of time, his is no mean achievement.

*Phineas Finn* (1869), the second novel of the series, suggests more immediately Trollope's growing interest in the political scene. Virtually every man of imagination has a dream which he cannot fulfill. A chimera beckons enticingly and distractingly, laying siege to his common sense. Trollope's siren stood between the lamps lighting the entrance to the House of Commons. "It is the only gate before which I have ever stood filled with envy,—sorrowing to think that my steps might never pass under it." The passage, significantly, is not from the *Autobiography* but from *Can You Forgive Her?*<sup>44</sup> It was in the Palliser novels that this frustrated statesman made his speeches to the world. "As I was debarred from expressing my opinions in the House of Commons, I took this method of declaring myself."<sup>45</sup>



*Phineas Finn* does not concern itself exclusively with politics. Indeed, politics is as incidental in this novel as was religion in *Barchester Towers*. Trollope was well aware that the science of government, however fascinating to such a man as himself, vitally interested in current events and in the men who make events, is not likely to be a moving subject for the generality of novel readers. In the first books of the series he is therefore very careful to spice parliamentary debates with a full measure of hunting and love-making. He did not dare to use much of the special information about British political life which he had assembled for his life of Palmerston, on which he was at work simultaneously with the novel. He had to content himself with allowing the House to serve as an alternating backdrop (with the country estates) for some very human actions and emotions. Of political philosophy there is virtually none. Of a social philosophy, including the complicated ethics of Victorian marriages, there is a great deal.

Hugh Walpole calls Phineas himself "a hollow drum,"<sup>46</sup> by which tautological figure he means to imply that the young man was full of sound and signified nothing. It is true, of course, that Trollope does not devote much space to Phineas' political opinions, which at the outset of his career are as vague and amorphous as those of an uncommitted opportunist are likely to be. Later, he takes a stand against his colleagues in the matter of Irish tenant rights and is forced to resign. But Phineas' stubbornness here is more a matter of protecting the interests of his constituents than exercising a reasoned political conviction. Nevertheless, Walpole is surely in error when he charges that Phineas is such a nonentity that nobody takes an interest in his fate: "Even when he is gaoled, waiting his trial for murder, we do not care whether he is hanged or no, and we are sure that Trollope does not care very greatly either."<sup>47</sup>

Phineas is not one of Trollope's most engaging characters, but there is so much patent Trollopian self-identification in the young man's career that author-interest, at least, is scarcely arguable. It is generally understood that Johnny Eames is a self-portrait. Phineas is just such another hobbledehoy, scraping along impecuniously for a time and then falling into the hands of the money-lenders. Chapter

xxi of *Phineas* ("Do Be Punctual") is, in fact, based on Trollope's financial embarrassments and their amusing consequences as narrated in the third chapter of his *Autobiography*. Phineas and Johnny, incidentally, have other points of similarity. The virtue of each is a forthright honesty, which, however, proves to be too dull a weapon with which to subdue the world. For his early successes each is forced to look to the influence of friends and to a providential, if rather fortuitous, legacy.

Walpole is probably right, however, in implying that the political characters are not alive. We see right honorable members slouch in the benches, hat over eyes. We hear Phineas make an ass of himself, as he thinks, in his maiden speech. We follow cabinet ministers through the gardens at country houses and eavesdrop on their secrets. But the aggressive warfare of politics shows itself only as a species of shadowboxing—this because Trollope did not force that guarded gate and had to settle for a seat in the public gallery. When he comes to chapter xxix ("A Cabinet Meeting") he must begin with a despairing note to the reader, explaining the harassments to which "the poor fictionist" is subjected who must describe a situation which he can never observe. Sometimes Trollope manages the swing of lively debate, but often, even where one might expect a colorful exchange of views, as in the Phineas-Monk talks in chapter lxv, the conversation is thin and dry. It may have been a recognition of the possible dullness of these masculine discussions that led Trollope to transform Lady Glencora into a woman of political interests and opinions. But this change is difficult to accept, for Lady Glen had never previously shown the slightest interest in politics. Alice Vavasor, on the other hand, had been a keen parliamentary student, but unfortunately, and perhaps unwisely, it was not in Trollope's plan to carry her further in the series.

Whatever dissatisfactions there may be with Phineas as protagonist, there has always been agreement that the Lady Laura-Robert Kennedy-Violet Effingham-Lord Chiltern quadrumvirate is vigorously and intelligently conceived. Chiltern perhaps repeats the pattern of Trollopian gentleman-savage too exactly. Like George Vavasor he has a great scar on his face which becomes inflamed in

his frequent moments of anger. He is as ferocious in love as in hunting and personal combat, but unlike George he has a tender heart. This he no doubt inherits from George Alfred Lawrence's Guy Livingstone, who had been a sensation a few years before and had created, in fact, the tradition in which Ouida and, to a lesser extent, that very clever novelist Rhoda Broughton achieved their popularity. Walpole thinks Chiltern the best character in the novel,<sup>48</sup> but everyone else, including Trollope,<sup>49</sup> casts his vote for Lady Laura. In *Can You Forgive Her?* Alice Vavasor escapes with very little punishment or penance for her errors, but Lady Laura, a genuinely tragic figure, is made to feel keenly her mistake, venial though it was. Violet Effingham, by contrast, achieves a full and satisfactory life. Her beauty and her wit are channeled not into the sterile wastes of Women's Rights, to which she once facetiously suggested she might devote herself, but into wifedom and motherhood, the Trollopian prescription for feminine happiness. Kennedy, a dour and morose Calvinist, driven by his jealousy into fanaticism, is a brilliant sketch.

Apart from the generally sound characterization, *Phineas Finn* is an oddly uneven book with major and minor weaknesses. Structurally, as Trollope saw,<sup>50</sup> the beginning and the end are weak. Nothing is gained by making Phineas an Irishman, and a great deal is lost by having him return to marry a pretty but colorless colleen who must be killed off before his re-entry into English politics. And there are a number of minor lapses in Trollope's sense of the real through which disbelief grows large; for example, Jane Bunce's letter to Phineas, which concludes, "I don't want nobody's wife and baby to have to do for, and 'd sooner have a Parliament gent like yourself than any one else. Yours 'umbly and respectful. . . ." The poorly lettered may speak dialect, but they do not write it. This tradition of comedy, which is at least as old as Smollett (see Winifred Jenkins), is out of place in a realistic work.

But the good things, full scenes to little touches, are more numerous. One remembers Mme. Max Goesler's delicate refusal of the old Duke of Omnium and her wisely disarming interview with Lady Glencora immediately afterwards. One remembers the wonderful letters,

particularly Mr. Monk's thoughtful and eloquent analysis of Reform—which makes one regret for a moment that Trollope did not succeed at Beverley. One remembers the many shrewd political observations, as, for example, a comment on Mr. Turnbull:

Being free from responsibility, he was not called upon either to study details or to master even great facts. It was his business to inveigh against existing evils, and perhaps there is no easier business when once the privilege of an audience has been attained.<sup>51</sup>

And one remembers Aspasia Fitzgibbon, who was "greatly devoted to her brother Laurence, so devoted that there was nothing she would not do for him, short of lending him money"—a remark which must have tickled Mark Twain, for he used it in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. Phineas Finn, to my mind the best of the Palliser novels, is still good reading.

Hugh Walpole, ignoring the obvious facts of Palliser chronology, regards *The Eustace Diamonds* (1873) as the "prelude" to the political novels. This cannot be, for we are told plainly that at the time of the action Mr. Palliser "had now for more than two years, filled the high place of Chancellor of the Exchequer,"<sup>52</sup> and at the close of *Can You Forgive Her?* he has not yet accepted that office. Walpole would have been on firmer ground had he argued that *The Eustace Diamonds* does not belong in the series at all; and indeed Trollope did not so regard it. Nevertheless, because of the presence of Plantagenet Palliser and Lady Glencora, even though Trollope must work hard to find something for them to do, *The Eustace Diamonds* may properly be considered a Palliser novel.

In view of the general enthusiasm over this book my own reaction must be regarded as atypical. *The Eustace Diamonds* was one of Trollope's great popular successes, giving his reputation a timely lift when in the early 'seventies it showed unmistakable signs of serious decline, and it continues to win wide critical support. Walpole's description of its charm is a lyric rhapsody: "one of the best novels that Trollope ever wrote,"<sup>53</sup> "richer in a variety of sharply contrasted but truly observed human beings than any other of Trollope's novels, save *Barchester Towers* and *The Last Chronicle*

of *Barset*,"<sup>54</sup> "one of the first comedies in the ranks of the English novel."<sup>55</sup> This strikes me as extravagantly uncritical. I am checked, however, by the thought that Sadleir praises its remarkable—for Trollope "almost fabulous"<sup>56</sup>—construction, has great admiration for its "brilliant picture of a raffish, equivocal group of self-seeking socialites," and awards it two stars, the Sadleirian Order of Merit, second class. I remember also that Miss Curtis Brown regards it as "first-rate," an "exquisite comedy . . . taut with suspense."<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless, I find *The Eustace Diamonds* rather dull. There is some interest, of course, in Lizzie Eustace, the poor man's Becky Sharp, but the Frank Greystock-Lucy Morris romance provides very muddy going. Trollope thought that his love story proved that a man over fifty *can* write of love. It may be that if we were not already wearisomely familiar with the unvarying Trollopian patterns, such a story could be endured, for Lucy has courage if not color. But the soil is exhausted, the fruit is dry—there is no springtime freshness in this air. Walpole says the novel "is not a page too long . . . the sub-plots . . . are as little tiresome as may be."<sup>58</sup> One must recognize Walpole as the perfect apologist. His statement ignores the long-winded introduction, which troubled the author, and the unspeakable Joseph Emilius, who has troubled everybody else. It also ignores the Mrs. Carbuncle-Lucinda Roanoke-Sir Griffin Tewett plot, which, whatever admiration we may have for Lucinda as a tragic figure, is wholly irrelevant to any developing issues.

As I reread *The Eustace Diamonds* I am almost tempted to accept Trollope's naive dictum that there must be characters with whom one can sympathize. There are very few, at any rate, in this novel. What is obviously more important, however, is that there should be characters who are interesting. There is nobody in *Vanity Fair* with whom one can sympathize—Becky is an opportunist, Rawdon an incompetent, Amelia a nonentity, George a cad, and Dobbin a sentimental fool. Yet *Vanity Fair* is a fascinating novel. Given much the same material, Trollope fails where Thackeray succeeds. Consider Lizzie. Here is a character with limitless possibilities: lovely, intelligent, wealthy, accomplished—and thoroughly unscrupulous. She is one of the few among Trollope's leading women who like literature, though Spenser and Shelley prove too much for her and

she quickly returns to Byron and novels. Lizzie is a schemer, always planning some cunning little maneuver that will extend her power. Becky is a schemer too, but she must plot in order to survive. There is a certain dignity in her economic and social compulsions. But Lizzie is rich, and her scheming is almost entirely matrimonial; therefore, by comparison, it is degrading. Furthermore, Becky has a rough-hewn honesty that is a part of her perfect self-knowledge. Lizzie is hypocritical and self-deceptive, cherishing an illusory belief in her goodness. Both are vulgar little adventuresses, but it is possible to have a tender spot in one's heart for Becky. A pert little vixen may be a fine character, and perhaps both young ladies qualify in this category, but Lizzie by failing to win our respect for any attribute of heart forfeits the amused tolerance with which Becky is universally regarded. But my sense of boredom with Lizzie and with the ragtag and bobtail of other shabby characters in *The Eustace Diamonds* is not widely shared, and I must record Walpole's judgment that Lizzie is "one of the truest and most consistent human beings that Trollope ever drew,"<sup>59</sup> and Sadleir's that she is "a masterpiece of subtlety."<sup>60</sup>

I find the strength of *The Eustace Diamonds*, then, not in the chief character nor in the much admired plot (Trollope's particular charm having nothing to do with plot anyway), but in certain minor sketches and incidental vignettes. The best of these is Lord Fawn, who is seen frequently through the series. A diffident and self-conscious nobleman on the sharp lookout for money to supplement his pittance as undersecretary in the India Office, he subdues his dislike of Lizzie to the extent of proposing, not without a good deal of encouragement and no little strategy on the part of the lady herself. When he learns of the Eustace diamonds scandal, he beats an undignified retreat but escapes only after being pretty badly shredded by the tiger's claws and lashed by her tongue. Lord Fawn is a very foolish man, and Trollope wrings all possible humor out of his embarrassments. Another excellent portrait, though briefer, is that of Thomas Dove, the learned counsel employed by Mr. Camperdown to give an opinion on the heirloom diamonds.<sup>61</sup>

But it is Lizzie Eustace who remains in the mind of most readers.

The consensus seems to agree with Disraeli, who at Lord Stanhope's dinner table remarked to Trollope, "I have long known, Mr. Trollope, your churchmen and churchwomen; may I congratulate you on the same happy lightness of touch in the portrait of your new adventuress?"<sup>62</sup> It is worth noting that such pleasant words from one of the masters of the polished compliment did not turn Trollope's head.

Two years after Phineas Finn's resignation from Parliament and return to Ireland and Mary Flood Jones he is invited by Barrington Erle to contest Tankerville in Durham.<sup>63</sup> He wins in a memorable election, and the Palliser novels, more "parliamentary" than before, are resumed. Trollope conceived of *Phineas Finn* and *Phineas Redux* (1874) as one novel, but he was afraid that the memory of his readers would not span the two parts. Furthermore, he did not think that anyone would read through the entire "semi-political" group sequentially. Today, with a better understanding of his purpose, we are in a position both to appreciate his accomplishment and to understand his failure.

Between *Phineas Finn* and *Phineas Redux* Trollope stood for Beverley and was defeated. However chagrining the experience may have been, it gave him a knowledge of the rough and tumble of political adventuring that could have been acquired no other way. If *Phineas Redux* is more political than the earlier novels in the series, it is no doubt because the itch and sting of Beverley were persistent. There is certainly a good deal more political talk, especially about Disestablishment and other church reforms, and we are more often behind closed doors with Mr. Daubeney, and Mr. Gresham, and Mr. Mildmay. The distinguished statesman L. S. Amery declares that the debates reported in *Phineas Redux* do "get the atmosphere of the House."<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, one must agree with Walpole that the political atmosphere remains hazy. There is a curious contradiction, however, in Walpole's discussion. He notes at one point that Trollope "is himself [so] bored with the question" of Reform that he "falls back on a somewhat unconvincing murder in order that the narrative interest may be sustained."<sup>65</sup> On the

very next page he remarks apropos of the merits of *Phineas Redux* that "in no place anywhere is there dullness." I have little doubt that Trollope, working without a plan, as usual, sensed that his story was going soggy and tried to rescue it from creeping ennui by a touch of sensationalism. But Walpole will not allow that he succeeded.

There is not a great deal to be said for the murder. For one thing Trollope wilfully robs us of our major interest by revealing from the first the identity of the murderer. Our interest in Phineas might have been greater had we been allowed to wonder for two hundred pages or so whether after all he had not had the energy to hit Mr. Bonteen over the head with a lifepreserver.<sup>66</sup>

It seems to me that there are two probable mistakes here. In the first place, we are not informed at once of the identity of the murderer. Perhaps I am confessing my unfamiliarity with mystery stories, or perhaps merely my obtuseness, but at the time of the murder I thought the criminal to be Robert Kennedy and made a marginal note to that effect. It is not until much later in the novel that the matter of guilt is established. But in the second place, it is surely an error to expect Trollope to be Wilkie Collins. The values which Trollope seeks are not those of suspense. The trial is a magnificent *tour de force*, with the reappearance of the admirable Chaffanbrass; it is self-sustaining and needs no aid from the apparatus of mystery.

Dr. Chapman, while admitting the plot of *Phineas Redux* to be "lounging . . . even sprawling,"<sup>67</sup> appreciates Trollope's care and ingenuity in giving direction to the central narrative of the murder. Some modicum of praise is doubtless deserved, for both here and in *The Eustace Diamonds* Trollope is more than usually content to allow the power generated by an exciting story to take the place of the normal brace of subplots. Had he been as wise in *The Last Chronicle*, he would have had an unequivocal masterpiece. But the pervasiveness of his constructive failures shows itself even in his tightest plots. Thus, in *Phineas Redux* the Gerald Maule-Adelaide Palliser story, which has no slightest bearing on Phineas Finn, is about as relevant as an inset narrative in a picaresque romance. To be endurable such an episode should at least have the charm of



novelty. But Trollope repeats one of his most familiar situations, that of the impecunious couple who dare not marry without money. Adelaide is an attractive, sensible girl; but Gerald's ironic self-portrait is very like the fact: "a poor creature, generally half asleep, shallow-pated, slow-blooded, ignorant, useless, and unambitious."<sup>68</sup> Such characters would have interest if given parts that had structural justification.

With many of his other minor characters Trollope does not make this mistake. There is Mr. Bunce (to climb the social ladder from the bottom), who, having been a journeyman scrivener in a legal stationer's office, is very learned in the law. Mr. Bunce burns with Radical notions and detests the rich, the aristocracy, M.P.'s, and the police. He is therefore a crony of Quintus Slide, the irrepressible editor of that fiery rag *The People's Banner*. Quintus has political ambitions. "I look upon the 'Ouse as my oyster," he confides on an intimate occasion, brandishing his pen, the weapon by which the oyster is to be opened. There is no doubt that he wields it cleverly. Read his editorial on Phineas's re-election at Tankerville. Then there is Mr. Bouncer, the dignified novelist, whose somewhat confused testimony on plotting in French fiction and on murders in literature is useful to Mr. Chaffanbrass. And there is Barrington Erle, private secretary to Mr. Mildmay. Barrington can conceive of no rewarding life outside parliament and no truth outside the Liberal party. And once again there is Lord Fawn, whose bumbling evidence at Phineas's trial so muddies the waters. It is not simply that these characters are amusing—they are vital, and their appearance in the novel is natural and accountable.

Only the "political gentlemen," Walpole feels,<sup>69</sup> are dead. We do not, in truth, see them in any capacity except that of statesmen, where they have an official pallor that not even the most choleric argument can change. But Mr. Daubeny, "the political Cagliostro," is certainly a very lively corpse. Disraeli must have chuckled as he recognized the likeness. It is impossible, by the way, that he should not have done so, in spite of the long line of critics who have denied that Trollope drew any of these figures from life. Miss Curtis Brown, our latest commentator, states flatly that the "statesmen are unidentifiable" and that supposed likenesses are "far-fetched."<sup>70</sup> In view

of the controversy it may be well to bring together a few pertinent references.

On March 31, 1869 the *Daily Telegraph* charged Trollope with ungentlemanly conduct in drawing portraits of living persons, especially of John Bright as Mr. Turnbull. He replied immediately.

Certainly it is neither gentlemanlike or right to do these things, and I protest that I have [not] done them. In the character of Mr. Turnbull to which allusion is made, I depicted Mr. Bright neither in his private or public character; and I cannot imagine how any likeness justifying such a charge against me can be found. The character that I have drawn has no resemblance to the chairman of the Board of Trade in person, in manners, in character, in mode of life, or even in the mode of expressing political opinion. It was my object to depict a turbulent demagogue;—but it was also my object so to draw the character that no likeness should be found in our own political circles for the character so drawn.<sup>71</sup>

The position of the *Daily Telegraph* was that Trollope had invaded the *private life* of the statesman. This he denied, both here and later in a letter to Mary Holmes with reference to *The Prime Minister*.

My first purpose is to say in reference to the P.M. [*Prime Minister*] that though in former novels certain well-known political characters, such as Disraeli and Gladstone, have been taken as models for such fictitious personages as Daubeney and Gresham, it has only been as to their particular tenets. There is nothing of personal characteristics here. When that has been attempted by me,—as in all the Palliser people,—the old Duke, the new Duke and Lady Glencora, there has been no distant idea in my own mind of any living person. They are pure creations; and (as I think) the best I ever made.<sup>72</sup>

It will be noticed that Trollope does not specifically deny that he represents both political points of view and individual persons; he declares only that he has invaded no one's privacy. The *Daily Telegraph's* identifications are as follows:

Daubeney = Disraeli  
Gresham = Gladstone  
Turnbull = Bright

Mildmay = Lord John Russell  
de Terrier = Lord Derby

In addition, Brock is usually assumed to be Palmerston.<sup>73</sup>

Walpole contends that "certain chapters in the middle of *Phineas Redux* . . . are Trollope at the highest power."<sup>74</sup> Although not everyone will go so far, there are at least several memorable people and things in this novel: the psychotic Robert Kennedy, quite mad at last; the vain yet manly and honest Phineas, who is a very human hero; the spirited hunting scenes; and the brilliantly described trial. These are enough to save a story that has a few soft spots and more than a few *longueurs*.

*The Prime Minister* (1876) is one of the most controversial of Trollope's novels. We are told in the *Autobiography* that it was "worse spoken of by the press than any novel I had written."<sup>75</sup> And the latest critic, L. S. Amery, who as introducer of the novel for the new Oxford edition might be expected to bring forward all that can be said in its favor, is hard pressed to find any virtues. Yet Hugh Walpole thinks the harsh reviews "undeserved,"<sup>76</sup> and Miss Curtis Brown, writing of its "comprehensiveness" and "implicit nobility,"<sup>77</sup> links it with *The Last Chronicle* and *The Way We Live Now* as one of Trollope's greatest novels. A closer look at what may lie behind such varied judgments is clearly indicated.

As an example of the reviews which Trollope saw, let us examine the *Spectator* article, by which he was "specially hurt." In a review of more than 2,000 words the writer makes only three points. First, *The Prime Minister* "is not one of Mr. Trollope's pleasanter novels."<sup>78</sup> This criticism is emphasized at great length, particularly in regard to the Wharton-Lopez plot. It is obvious that for the critic a novel to be good must be cheery and bright. No comment on this lighthearted philosophy of fiction is necessary. Second, the critic charges that both the Duke and Lady Glencora are "vulgar." The substantiating evidence against the Duke is that his bearing toward Sir Orlando Drought, his bitter opponent in the House, is "insolent." Trollope has failed to "perceive what relations are and are not possible among English political men." One can only say after re-reading the text that the reviewer's definition of vulgarity has never been sanctioned by any dictionary. No wonder that Trollope, thinking that in Plantagenet Palliser he had drawn a perfect gentleman,

was crushed. The evidence against Lady Glencora is more damaging. Trollope once told Escott that the Duchess was "une grande dame manquée."<sup>79</sup> There are certainly moments in *The Prime Minister* when in seeking to raise her husband to an eminence which he did not want she lost sight of perfect decorum. Since this was a studied characterization, it is difficult to see how it constitutes a criticism of the novel. Third, the Duke of St. Bungay is a fine character, and his relations with the Duke of Omnium are described "with exquisite delicacy and skill."<sup>80</sup> One carries away the impression that *The Prime Minister* is not really a bad book, but that the reviewer, who has come to expect only the best from Trollope, is disappointed with his second-best but cannot adequately document his chagrin.

Mr. Amery's objections are not so easily disposed of. That the Wharton-Lopez story is "unconvincing" nobody ever denied.<sup>81</sup> It is as bad as such things can be. But when he says that it is "only very slenderly and artificially linked with the main narrative,"<sup>82</sup> he must contend with Hugh Walpole, who rejoices that "for once at least his sub-plot is connected with his main plot."<sup>83</sup> The two critics would apparently agree, however, that the political story is a likely remedy for insomnia. Walpole says in a purplish passage, "The political chapters of *The Prime Minister* are one vast draught, scraps of political papers blowing down empty corridors before a ghostly breeze."<sup>84</sup>

If this is so, though I am less inclined to admit it here than with some of the other novels, *why* is it so? A partial answer is supplied by Trollope himself, who was shrewd enough to see that political characters must be colorless because they are so often called upon to submerge their identity in group action. Each must put aside his personal idiosyncrasies. As Trollope expressed it, the stones become worn down to smooth pebbles.<sup>85</sup> Smooth pebbles have a uniformity which may make them of less interest than those of more prickly proportions. But a full answer, I think, must draw us to a closer examination of the character of Plantagenet Palliser. Trollope has himself done this so beautifully in the *Autobiography* that one despairs of abridging his remarks without omitting relevant points or

damaging the fine fabric of his thought and presentation. Briefly, the Duke is a man of scruples. He could not, therefore, become merely one of many smooth pebbles. Among his virtues is unblemished, unextinguishable, inexhaustible love of country; this had become, indeed, his ruling passion. But he is scrupulous, and being scrupulous, weak. When called to the highest place in the council of his Sovereign, he feels with true modesty his own insufficiency, but nonetheless the greed of power grows upon him. "Such was the character that I endeavoured to depict in describing the triumph, the troubles, and the failure of my Prime Minister. And I think that I have succeeded." <sup>86</sup>

Mr. Amery tells us that the Duke does not interest most readers, and the sales figures which I quoted above <sup>87</sup> prove that he is right. In view of the comment in the novel that "Phineas Finn had read the Duke's character rightly in saying that he was neither gregarious nor communicative, and therefore but little fitted to rule Englishmen," <sup>88</sup> it is curious that Trollope did not realize how neutral his character would appear. Perhaps the common reaction to the Duke is very like that of his wife, who was not one to appreciate the less dramatic virtues. When Mrs. Finn remarks in extenuation that "The Duke is very sensitive," the Duchess replies: "Yes;—but the worst of it is, that when they suffer from this weakness, which you call sensitiveness, they think that they are made of finer material than other people. Men shouldn't be made of Sèvres china, but good stone earthenware." <sup>89</sup> English Prime Ministers in the nineteenth century were brilliant and exciting; the Duke of Omnium, by contrast, is a dry stick. He has the devotion of a dedicated civil servant, but he has no policy, no burning convictions, no disciples who will die for him. When Sir Orlando attacks, there is none to come to the Duke's support.

If one were asked in these days what gift should a Prime Minister ask first from the fairies, one would name the power of attracting personal friends. Eloquence, if it be too easy, may become almost a curse. Patriotism is suspected, and sometimes sinks almost to pedantry. A Joveborn intellect is hardly wanted, and clashes with the inferiorites. Industry is exacting. Honesty is unpractical. Truth is easily offended. Dignity will not bend.

But the man who can be all things to all men, who has ever a kind word to speak, a pleasant joke to crack, who can forgive all sins, who is ever prepared for friend or foe but never very bitter to the latter, who forgets not men's names, and is always ready with little words,—he is the man who will be supported at a crisis such as this that was now in the course of passing. It is for him that men will struggle, and talk, and, if needs be, fight, as though the very existence of the country depended on his political security. The present man would receive no such defence.<sup>90</sup>

The Duke of Omnium is not a simple soul, as are many, perhaps most, of Trollope's characters. He is a complex product of the artistic imagination. And so, in defiance of the patent fact that he could never have achieved the easy popularity of a Mrs. Proudie or of a Doctor Thorne, he was cherished by his creator above all others.

It is doubtless unwise for a mere layman to take issue with a distinguished statesman, but it may be permitted to express surprise at one of his most curious statements. Mr. Amery speaks of "Trollope's complete incapacity to be interested in, or understand, political issues as such."<sup>91</sup> I realize, of course, that Mr. Amery is contrasting Disraeli with Trollope, writers whose objects were utterly different—the one a professional politician whose novels simply objectify his political creed, the other a professional novelist who often dealt in social and political satire. But it is scarcely legitimate to impute a limitation to Trollope's knowledge either by virtue of what material he chose to exclude from a group of popular novels or by virtue of the fact that he thought Disraeli's novels artificial and therefore false. No one criticizes him because in the *Barsetshire* series he does not discuss Puseyism or the problem of Grace. No more should he be criticized because the *Palliser* novels are not a manifesto for the Young England movement. I do not see that the absence of current political issues in a novel argues the writer's incapacity or lack of interest. I think it *does* argue his sharp sense of what constitutes a readable novel, and I challenge as proof a comparison of the reputation of these two men as novelists. It may be that Trollope could not understand politics (though I do not think this is true), but I am sure that such an assertion cannot be

tested simply by noting the relative absence of political ideas in the Palliser novels.<sup>92</sup>

Whatever the intrinsic merits of *The Prime Minister* may be, it has stimulated lively discussion. My own view is that were it not for the Wharton-Lopez plot, the characters of which are weak and the inevitable denouement of which is clear from the first pages, the novel would hold its own with the best of the series, for the interest of the political story is well sustained. But the disfigurements loom large in one's memory, and *The Prime Minister* is read today, I fancy, only by those few enthusiasts who will settle for nothing less than *all* of Trollope.

Before *The Prime Minister* had concluded its serial publication Trollope began *The Duke's Children* (1880). But the severe critical reaction, obviously unexpected, made him hesitate to push another Palliser novel. He therefore tossed the completed manuscript in a drawer and did not attempt to publish it for three years. He need not have been so timid, for this time the critics found much to praise. Even the reviewer for the *Spectator*, though he felt called upon to preserve his reputation for consistency by asserting that the novel is Trollope "not quite at his best,"<sup>93</sup> gives up finally and admits that it is "thoroughly readable and one of the most edifying [novels] that Mr. Trollope has yet produced." Modern critics support this judgment. Escott says that it is "infinitely superior to *The Prime Minister*."<sup>94</sup> Walpole lists it among Trollope's half-dozen best,<sup>95</sup> and Amery calls it "in some ways the most attractive of the series."<sup>96</sup> I should not care to go so far as Walpole because the situations are too familiar, but the Duke comes alive at last and there is less ennui.

*The Duke's Children*, without doubt, is a Palliser, not a "Parliamentary," novel. There is virtually nothing in the way of politics. No papers blow down empty corridors. Instead, we watch the Duke himself—at home. *The Prime Minister* was the history of the Duke's *political* failure through weaknesses of character, though they were the weaknesses of exaggerated virtues; *The Duke's Children* is the history of his *domestic* failure from the same causes. The title, in-

cidentally, will not mislead those who have followed Plantagenet Palliser from *The Small House*. The subject of this novel is not really the children. Their story has been told many times before. It is the Duke. His story Trollope had never fully told; and now that we have heard it to this point, we are, I think, inclined to agree that Trollope's pride in the developed conception of his character is fully justified.

Had Trollope written a few generations earlier, he might have entitled his novel *The Duke's Children; or, the Education of Plantagenet Palliser*. Here is a man who had lost touch with his family. The pressure of official business, plus the somewhat boisterous efficiency of his wife, had combined to eliminate the Duke from the family councils. Now, as we learn on the first page, Lady Glencora is dead. The Duke had never been close to his wife. That little indiscretion with Burgo had long been forgiven but never entirely forgotten, and the personal association between husband and wife, though amiable, had rarely been intimate. Suddenly he is responsible for the welfare of two children, who, though adult, have apparently got themselves into difficulties. Silverbridge, like Pendennis, has fallen into the hands of disreputable sharpers and lost £70,000 on a horse race. He has also become interested in a vivacious and talented American girl, whose grandfather, alas, was a laboring man. Though Isabel's father is a distinguished professor whose name has been whispered as a possible presidential candidate, the taint of the grandparent persists. Lady Mary has been foolish enough to encourage a worthy young man who has neither rank nor money. The Duke's plans for the reformation of his son are not without originality. They include, for example, a reading of *Clarissa Harlowe*. But the children, of course, have their way. As in *Framley Parsonage* Lady Lufton must subdue her prejudices and ask Lucy Robarts to marry her son, so here the Duke must approach Mr. Boncassen with his consent. He must also welcome the audacious Frank Tregear as a son-in-law. He groans but capitulates. When in the closing lines of the book Silverbridge declares that Mary's love for Frank did not surprise him, his father replies:



"I do not know that one ought to be surprised at anything. Perhaps what surprised me most was that he should have looked so high. There seemed to be so little to justify it. But now I will accept as courage what I before regarded as arrogance."

The Duke's social education is complete.

But the Duke is not the only triumph of characterization in this novel. Isabel Boncassen and Lady Mabel Grex come home to us with the reality of authentic experience. The only dissenters to Isabel's American charm are the Stebbinses, who charge both Trollope and his readers with inability "to gauge her mediocre quality,"<sup>97</sup> assert that Trollope could not understand American girls, and recommend that transatlantic matters be left to Howells and James. Howells did not often attempt to portray American innocents abroad, but James did, notably, and it is therefore pertinent to see what he has to say about Isabel. "Trollope's treatment of this complicated being [the American girl] is full of good humour and that fatherly indulgence, that almost motherly sympathy, which characterizes his attitude throughout toward the youthful feminine."<sup>98</sup> James then cites a phrase from Isabel in which Trollope's ear for American speech is faulty, but he concludes, "on the whole, in these matters Trollope does very well."

Lady Mabel Grex is a character in whom Trollope might well have taken pride. Here is no moonstruck girl, feeding a starved emotional life on the pap of sentimental fantasy, but an unhappy woman of thoroughly adult feelings and perceptions. The chapter in which she confesses to Silverbridge her long-cherished love for Frank Tregear is one of the truest scenes Trollope ever wrote, and the chapter in which she and Frank bid each other a final and irrevocable goodbye is one of the most touching. After following the career of this unfortunate girl, only an undiscerning critic would charge Trollope with inability to describe meaningful love.

The great faults of *The Duke's Children*, and perhaps of the entire Palliser series, are a predictive inevitability in the love story and a maundering narrative manner. The story opens well, and the comedy and tragedy of the family relationships are skillfully spread.

But Trollope does not keep his situations taut. Relaxation is followed by the approach of boredom, which, however, Trollope fends off, though it remains always close at hand. It is almost the Trollopian manner to keep the interest as loose as the plotting. But the interest is there—it carries us through. The pace sometimes slackens dangerously, but there is no wavering.

In *The Duke's Children*, the last chronicle of Plantagenet Palliser, the Duke emerges at last from parliamentary shadows and becomes more real than he has ever been before. One leaves the sequence of which he has been the unifying figure with not only a strong consciousness of his humanity—his diffidence, his embarrassment, and his sense of helpless bewilderment in all complex personal relationships; but, more importantly, his tireless loyalty, his unswerving rectitude, and his unimpeachable integrity.

### *The Irish Novels*

It is not only in the Palliser novels, however, that Trollope is concerned with the state of society. Under the surface of his most conventional romances there often runs a current of social commentary, and there is at least one well-defined classification of his novels in which the approach is chiefly sociological. The Irish novels contain Trollope's thoughtful observations on the character of the Irish people, and they either imply or directly state his understanding of the peculiar problems of that country. It is probably true that nobody could write of Ireland at mid-century without considering that country's unhappy economics, but Trollope, I think, offers more than fiction with some serious overtones. He knew the Irish people, and he caught their spirit and their temper in his novels.

Trollope was accustomed to identify the turning point in his life with the day he landed in Ireland. He had been a wretched failure in London, a lumpish and laggard postal clerk, and his superiors were most happy to be rid of him. They forwarded to Dublin a character appraisal which left no doubt that the young man's tenure in his new office would be very brief. Such was the state of Trol-

lope's finances that he has to borrow £200 (two years' salary) from the family lawyer to clean up his debts and get out of the country. But independence, responsibility, and the consciousness of work well done and appreciated wrought a transformation that is not altogether unfamiliar among young men of unexercised talent who have not found themselves. In the atmosphere of Ireland Trollope prospered, and he made it his home for eighteen years.

To assess the impact of Trollope's Irish experiences upon his character is the function of the biographer. The student of the novels, however, is not entirely exempted from a similar inquiry. How was Ireland in the early 'forties likely to affect an unlicked cub with some literary background and a good deal of ambition but no guidance? In what ways was a new environment likely to stimulate his imagination? Did he bring to his subject matter any knowledge of the already considerable literature of Irish regionalism and local color? What did he think that he, an inexperienced outlander, might contribute to an established form? Not all of these questions can be answered precisely, but there is at least no doubt that Trollope would not so soon have become a writer (perhaps he might never have become a writer) had he remained in London. Young Anthony Trollope, postal clerk, could have had nothing to say about London life that had not already been said by his betters. The only story he could have told was *The Three Clerks*, but even that required in the telling a subtlety, a maturity, and a literary sophistication which he was not to have for some years. Ireland gave him material possessed by no other English writer of the time, and the consciousness of the peculiar advantages which were his gave him the courage to strike out with an original work of fiction.

His advantages consisted in an almost unparalleled knowledge of the Irish people. A native, while he may be in the best position to interpret the temper of his countrymen, is in no position properly to understand their idiosyncrasies. To do so demands a cosmopolitan experience which few Irish writers, at any rate, had at that time. Trollope brought to the Irish novel an objectivity which not even Maria Edgeworth could match, yet he was almost as close to the peasants as Carleton or the Banims. His postal travels took him by

the Bianconi cars<sup>99</sup> into every county in Ireland; when the passable roads ceased, he proceeded into the countryside on horseback. His statement that he knew Ireland "perhaps better than any other person"<sup>100</sup> was not idly or boastfully made. To turn such knowledge to literary account was a temptation not to be resisted. How well he succeeded is best described by the critic for the *Dublin Review* in 1872, who describes him as "keenly observant, painstaking, absolutely sincere and unprejudiced, with a lynx-like clearness of vision. . . ."<sup>101</sup> His handling of Irish humor shows that he "has thoroughly imbibed its spirit, and mastered its forms more completely than any other writer who ever studied them. . . ."<sup>102</sup>

It is difficult to determine precisely what Trollope had read in Irish fiction when, probably on lonely evenings in back-country inns, he began *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*. Not a great deal, I think. No doubt he knew *Castle Rackrent* and *The Absentee* through his mother's interest in Maria Edgeworth. And having met Charles Lever at the house of a Harrovian friend, William Gregory, he had surely read *Harry Lorrequer* and *Charles O'Malley*; but the picaresque tradition of Irish high-jinks was of little importance for him. What we should like to be able to establish is that he had read Lady Morgan, John and Michael Banim, William Carleton, Gerald Griffin, and Mrs. S. C. Hall. His library catalogue is not very helpful. He owned no book by Carleton, the Banims, or Mrs. Hall. Of books by Lady Morgan he had only the *Journal in Italy*, and of a set of Griffin's works only volumes one and eight: a biography and *Poems*. Yet it is unthinkable that an aspiring novelist living in Ireland should not know the work of the leading writers. No doubt as a young man paying off a large debt he chose to borrow books rather than to buy them. We have it on the authority of Escott that he read and admired Carleton. *Fardorougha the Miser* he thought a "really stimulating story,"<sup>103</sup> and *Tales of Ireland* he always compared with Dean Ramsay's *Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character*. It is reasonable to believe that although his reading was not extensive, he had a bowing acquaintance with the chief Irish novelists.

Perhaps the question of Trollope's familiarity with earlier writers

has more biographical than literary interest. *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* (1847) is really not a derivative work. It may be in some respects a genre piece, but it owes less to the Irish tradition than might be expected. Trollope has told his story with concessions to the clichés of Irish melodrama, but he put the impression of his own genius deeply upon his first book. It is one of the anomalies of publishing history that while we have had new editions of *Cousin Henry*, *The Golden Lion of Grandpère*, and *An Old Man's Love*, *The Macdermots* should have been out of print for half a century. It is not a perfect novel—no first novel ever is, not even *Wuthering Heights*, which the intrepid if somewhat unscrupulous Newby published a few months after he had allowed *The Macdermots* to fall silently from his press. But it is a good novel, of firm texture, adequate if not beautiful design, and a sensitive coloring that picks up but does not exaggerate the native Irish hues.

Thirty years after the fact Trollope viewed quite unsentimentally his first of several failures. In a characteristically deprecatory evaluation he said that he had a good plot but "broke down in the telling."<sup>104</sup> This is not strictly true. The plot, though allowing for effective use of controlled pathos, is not particularly original, and there *are* signs of inexperience—a creaking genealogical opening, a few extraneous episodes, such as the Counsellor Brown-Jonas Webb duel, and an almost fatal tendency for the plot to play itself out and expire slackly. But few readers will remember the mistakes. What holds the high gloss of deft achievement is the passion of a number of felt characters and scenes: old Larry Macdermot, nerveless and impotent of spirit, surrendering to the ebb tide of a useless life with a despairing apathy;<sup>105</sup> Thady Macdermot, gloomy and tyrannical, too weak to stem the advancing degradation of his family; and Feemy Macdermot, proud and handsome but ignorant and headstrong, acting out with unquestioning devotion the ancient tragedy of misplaced and heedless love. Not even the most casual reader is likely to forget the high drama of the wedding and race-course scenes, the tension of Thady's escape to the hills, and the agonizing inevitability of the trial as it drags its slow length along.

Trollope did not write his first novel with that mechanical fluency

which he later developed. He worked slowly and thoughtfully, putting a great deal of himself into his novel. The results justified the effort, for the emotional drive of *The Macdermots* is strong. If a novelist concerns himself in any way with the dark recesses of the human heart, it is a temptation to compare him with Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. Such an analogy can be suggested only as a matter of dim and far-off Trollopian prescience of the great Russian novel, but that there are any valid points of reference at all is a tribute to the potential power, in this respect never realized, of the young novelist. Trollope wrote no more than the truth when in 1874 he told Mary Holmes that *The Macdermots* had "truth, freshness, and a certain tragic earnestness."<sup>106</sup>

Perhaps with the thought of lifting the encircling gloom of his first novel<sup>107</sup> Trollope suffused through *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* (1848) a full measure of high-spirited fun. The tragic mood is lifted to permit the intrusion of varied elements of plot and character types. *The Kellys* is something of a potpourri of fictional methods and materials, a kind of Irish stew of moods and tempi. Its value as a social study consists in Trollope's transcription of folkways and local color, faithfully and effectively recorded.

*The Kellys* has plenty of substance and a savor that persists. Trollope is quite right in calling it a good story. I think he is wrong, however, in regarding it as superior to *The Macdermots* in craftsmanship. There are two stories: the pale and conventional high caste romance of Lord Ballindine and Fanny Wyndham, and the blooded, emotional tale of Martin Kelly and the Lynches. These are not plot and subplot but two parallel narratives. Most readers must be disconcerted by the fact that, like all parallels, they never touch. Lord Ballindine has a nodding acquaintance with Martin Kelly; by so much and no more are the parts of this novel related. Chapter xxviii begins, "We will now return to Grey Abbey . . . and . . . Fanny Wyndham." Chapter xxxiv begins, "We will now return for a while to Dunmore, and settle the affairs of the Kellys and Lynches." In the vast distance between these crudely chipped out blocks of narrative one has quite lost sight of half the story.

*The Kellys* justifies Trollope's estimate of it ("a good Irish story")<sup>108</sup> chiefly on the basis of the peasant characters and dialogue. He rarely got into his sights a more amusing eccentric than Mrs. Mary Kelly, the fiery-tempered but goodhearted landlady who, while helping Anty Lynch to escape from her murderous brother, never ceased to complain of all the trouble to which she was being subjected. But the vital characters in *The Kellys* are all minor. As often in Dickens, whose influence on this novel is clearly marked, the principals are tepid and conventional. We know from a passage in *The Warden* that Trollope recognized this quality of Dickens's work,<sup>109</sup> but he is himself vulnerable to the same charge.

Tepid and conventional, also, is the speech of the well-born characters. The argument between Fanny and Selina in the chapter called "The Two Friends" and the colloquy between Fanny and Adolphus in the next chapter, "Lord Kilcullen's Wooing," show that Trollope was repeating the accents of other books. Peasants and townsfolk, however, he had listened to, and he catches not only the brogue but the lilting rhythm and racy idiom of their talk. The Irish, like the French, are a very voluble people, and it is a fact worth noting that perhaps two-thirds of *The Kellys* is dialogue, a percentage which is quite un-Victorian and which is not even approached in any other Trollope novel. It is this dynamic, colorful talk, on the lips of vital and imaginative characters, that cancels out the weaknesses of plot that disfigure Trollope's second novel.

Not until thirteen years later did Trollope return to Ireland for a story. *Castle Richmond* (1860), notable for a harrowing picture of the potato famine of 1845, illustrates his increasing concern for the desperate plight of the Irish tenant farmer. Indeed, so intent is he on exposition that the narrative threatens to become lost in facts, figures, and exhortations. Sadleir, who calls *Castle Richmond* a "documented essay on distress,"<sup>110</sup> is reluctant to acknowledge its claims as fiction.<sup>111</sup> But however poorly Trollope may have laced the facts into the texture of his narrative, he did not, like Reade and Collins, print as fiction long excerpts from state papers. It is, I think, the facts themselves that sustain the narrative. Technically,

the famine scenes are not very well managed. But less excusable than the sociology is the philosophy, which in the form of rather heavy moralizing often becomes sticky.<sup>112</sup>

The historical and descriptive chapters project themselves so much more shiningly, so much more winningly, on one's memory than do the events of the formal "story" that Trollope's design for *Castle Richmond* is distorted. This could not be so if the plot were more attractive. But Trollope chose to tell an unpleasant story, and does not redeem its sordidness with characters who are either deeply moving or, to use his term, sympathetic. The situation from *Henry Esmond*<sup>113</sup> in which the triangle is composed of mother, daughter, and young man has interesting fictional possibilities, but it must be treated with consummate artistry lest it become either revolting or ridiculous. Trollope's Countess of Desmond, whose materialism has failed to bring her happiness, might have been a figure of authentic tragedy, but her stern and moody melancholy yields dislike rather than pathos.

The soundest timbers of Trollope's narrative framework are Matthew and Abraham Mollett, as arrant a pair of scoundrels as one is likely to see in fiction. The chapters in which these accomplished blackguards appear are the sustaining props in a novel which needs a good deal of support.<sup>114</sup>

We are told that the mind of man reverts in old age to the scenes of earlier years. At his death Trollope was working on another Irish novel, *The Landleaguers*, which he left unfinished. It is not a good book, and nobody has gone out of his way to praise it. Sadleir, for example, dismisses it as a "sad account of wretched actuality, in which characterization is submerged in floods of almost literal fact."<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, I find the historical material and the controversial background, which Trollope twice risked his precarious health to investigate on the spot, quite unobjectionable. I except from this blanket approval, of course, chapter xli, "The State of Ireland," which is simply an essay on politics and current events. The manuscript of *The Landleaguers* I have not examined, but I should be surprised if the pages now labeled chapter xli were not intended by the author, who could have seen only the first few



chapters through the press, as a preface for the first edition. He writes, for example, "It cannot be denied that the promoters of the Land Laws are weak, and that the disciples of the Land-League are strong. In order that the truth of this may be seen and made apparent, the present story is told."<sup>116</sup> Trollope's failure arises, I think, not from having become mired in a morass of current history, but from the inability of a tired old man to sustain a credible and unhackneyed story.

*The Landleaguers* opens rather well, however. The disasters which befall the Jones family, the flooding of the fields, the cattle-maiming—all this has life and movement. But the misfortunes of Florian, the ten-year-old Roman Catholic martyr, harried to distraction by conflicting loyalties, are so contrived as to be more shrill and strident than pathetic. Gerald O'Mahony, the elegant but impractical Irish-American agitator, is probably the one memorable character. However his daughter Rachel, the *prima donna*, is one of Trollope's mistakes; indeed, all the scenes drawn from the world of music, which was quite unknown to Trollope, are shabby and false. Mahomet M. Moss, the Jewish impresario who is Rachel's manager, is an absurd caricature. After the tension of Florian's murder the story interest collapses, and the novel sags and wobbles toward a never-reached conclusion. Only the most loyal Trollopian could have followed *The Landleaguers* much further. Its importance for the present inquiry lies in the fact that for forty years the social problems of Ireland were close to Trollope's heart, that he ended his long career as a novelist just as he began it—with an attempt to interpret these problems to the English people.

### *Vignettes and Satires*

It can be argued that in a sense all of Trollope's novels are social studies, since his purpose was to exhibit the mores and manners of his countrymen within the framework of popular fiction. Sometimes, as in *The Landleaguers*, he becomes virtually a propagandist; sometimes, as in *The Way We Live Now*, his expressed design is a gen-

eral satire on the temper of the age; but more often he sinks his social commentary beneath the surface of his comedies of young love. If Trollope survives, it is not because one develops an interest in the progress of his romances but because one recognizes the truth of social fact in the Victorian panorama he unrolls. The triumph of Trollope's realism is the sense of immersion in a plausible social scene which dominates all but his shallowest books. By reference to several novels not previously considered I should like to illustrate the place and relative importance of the social scene in Trollope's concept of fiction. This will entail a discussion of a number of aspects of these novels.

*The Three Clerks* (1858) is in some respects an autobiographical novel, for the trials of Charley Tudor at the Internal Navigation Office are admittedly those undergone by Anthony Trollope at the Post Office. But much of the interest of the novel is in the amusing vignettes of London life as seen by a set of rather harum-scarum young bloods. Trollope strikes some readers, I fear, as a perennially middle-aged novelist. Perhaps *The Three Clerks* can shake this notion, for it is the work of a young amateur, a high-spirited apprentice writer who is not afraid to make mistakes. If it be said that the author of *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers* is scarcely an apprentice, one can only reiterate that *The Three Clerks* is nevertheless the work of a very young writer. Of all Trollope's novels this is the wittiest, and the chapter called "The Three Kings" contains the cleverest writing he ever did. When a man attempts to dramatize his autobiography, it is well that he does so when he is still young enough to recreate authentically the gaiety and the insouciance, as well as the *Weltschmerz*, of his adolescence. There comes a time when, though we have not forgotten, we cannot recapture the spirit of youth. There will be an obvious effort, there will be exaggerations that are painful, more painful than the exaggerations of youth itself. Fortunately, Trollope's autobiographical novel came early. What it might have been had it been written ten years later may be predicted from the London scenes of *The Last Chronicle of Barset*. But here is youth—ebullient, iconoclastic, corrosive, yet troubled and obscurely unhappy; living with apparent nonchalance, yet lov-

ing sentimentally. There is always time for humor, which is the prevailing mood.

The youthful spirit is not remarkable for balance, for discretion, for a sense of decorum. It is not surprising, therefore, that there are excesses in *The Three Clerks* which lessen, though they do not cancel out, the pleasure that one can find in the novel. In the first place, it is overweighted with plot. Not content with three sets of lovers, each of which must be followed in turn, Trollope calls upon subsidiary characters and situations without number. The inevitable result is a nearly fatal sagging of interest at three or four crucial points. An already complex plot, but a good one, should not have been distended by irrelevant material. In the second place, there is a great deal of writing that is in very bad taste. It is an unfortunate fact that Charley Tudor's short story "Crinoline and Macassar," bad as it is, is not much worse than some pages of Trollope. When Mrs. Woodward tells Charley that he must not see Katie any more:

He turned his face away from her, but still stood leaning on the stile, with his arms folded on it. She watched him for a while in silence, and at last she saw big tears drop from his face on to the dust of the path on the farther side. There they came rolling down, large globules of sorrow.<sup>117</sup>

When Alaric comes unexpectedly upon Undy Scott in Bayswater, both the action and the language become highly theatrical—the theater in this instance being that of Victorian melodrama.

Alaric Tudor could not restrain himself. "You scoundrel," said he, seizing Undy by the collar; "you utterly unmitigated scoundrell You premeditated, wilful villain!" and he held Undy as though he intended to choke him.

But Undy Scott was not a man to be thus roughly handled with impunity; and in completing the education which he had received, the use of his fists had not been overlooked. He let out with his right hand, and struck Alaric twice with considerable force on the side of his jaw, so that the teeth rattled in his mouth.

But Alaric, at the moment hardly felt it. "You have brought me and mine to ruin," said he; "you have done it purposely, like a fiend. But, low as I have fallen, I would not change places with you for all that the

earth holds. I have been a villain; but such villainy as yours—ugh—” and so saying, he flung his enemy from him, and Undy, tottering back, saved himself against the wall.<sup>118</sup>

And there are a few more misdemeanors by which we are made uncomfortable. The caricatures of Sir Charles Trevelyan as Sir Gregory Hardlines and Sir Stafford Northcote as Sir Warwick Westend gave official offence and later embarrassed Trollope himself. There is also a battering attack on Peel. Whatever this indulgence in personalities may do to authenticate the social scene, it adds nothing to *The Three Clerks* as a novel. Trollope's early satires are heavy-handed and immature.

The catalogue of Trollopian improprieties in *The Three Clerks* is misleadingly large, for the positive merits of the novel, developing out of conventional and therefore unpromising material, far outweigh its numerous defects. The young people and the things they do come home to us as universal and true. This is Trollope's achievement here as elsewhere—that the social scene and those who constitute it are given the sharpness and the vitality of truth. The characters are not precious, nor are they poetic. They do not sing. But for the most part they speak plainly and engagingly. When Trollope is not playing moony tunes on the sentimental strings, they carry their authenticity easily and lightly. At such moments there is good, high-spirited fun. What one remembers about this novel, however, is not the rather silly young lovers but glimpses of the routined world of the junior clerks, copying their memoranda in fusty offices and drinking their beer in drab and smoky pubs. Yet nobody takes *The Three Clerks* too seriously, least of all Trollope, and that is perhaps why, like Thackeray, we are likely on a dull evening to come tramping up the stairs loudly calling for the second volume of this entertaining novel.

There are times when Trollope submits to the bright pattern of innocuous Victorian romance: after petty harassments and wearisome delays the lovers, surrounded by happy relatives and friends, are united as merry bells ring out. And there are times when he submits to the dark reversal of the pattern: the innocent and trusting girl, seduced and abandoned by her lover, is driven to dull, un-

assuageable despair when her maddened mother pushes the faithless young man over a cliff to his death, and her child dies.<sup>119</sup> Fortunately, Trollope is not often so egregiously false to life. He can tell a very human story of two young people, trapped in a circle of sardonic relationships, who are uncertain of themselves and whose marriage promises very little genuine happiness. But such novels as *The Bertrams* were not popular in 1859.

The story of George Bertram and Caroline Waddington, cousins whose engagement, broken when they realized they could not live on George's income, was followed by Caroline's unhappy marriage to Sir Henry Harcourt, a brilliant but unscrupulous schemer, is somber and low-spirited and touched with a brooding sense of tragic inevitability. It does not help matters much that after Sir Henry's suicide, George and Caroline are reunited, for one feels that their life together cannot fail to reflect darkly both their personal failure in terms of courage and the general lack of idealism in their narrow social world. George's uncle, George Bertram, Sr., is a crotchety old curmudgeon, who, when he is convinced of his nephew's financial irresponsibility, leaves his considerable fortune to found "Bertram's College," an institution to educate the children of London fishmongers. George's father, Sir Lionel Bertram, a soldier of fortune holding a quasi-military position in Persia—"an elderly gentleman, in a military frock, with a bald head, a hook nose, and a short allowance of teeth"<sup>120</sup>—is an adventurer who, as it turns out, has rather lost his suave touch with the ladies, but he can still make himself a nuisance with his son. These are not pleasant people, but unlike Dickens's villains, some of whom play the ogre too sedulously, they leave a very bitter taste in the mouth. Today's readers are likely to fancy the bitter more than the sweet, and *The Bertrams* may therefore find a readier and more appreciative audience than it had a century ago.

The principal check upon the success of this novel in the 1950's is its ponderous plot, which hitches along in most ungainly fashion, veering off down many side roads (one or two of which are not unattractive) before arriving at its familiar destination. I have said before of several Trollope novels that they need the editorial blue

pencil. *The Bertrams* needs surgery—cutting, reshaping, and stitching. The potential of a very decent novel is here, but nothing less than a complete overhauling can give it form, without which few critics today will consider it very seriously. How to integrate such diverse materials as the descriptions of the Holy Land, Littlebath card parties, shipboard romance, and long theological argument was not apparent to Trollope and would no doubt defy the best efforts of anyone else. Yet none of these things is without interest. The error lies in Trollope's simply unloading the full cart on the Bertrams' doorstep. He was a middle-aged man but a very young writer in 1858-59, and he tried to use every idea and every character that his imagination offered. *The Bertrams* is a work of undisciplined genius.

Trollope did not always have courage enough to let his tragic situation stand alone. In fear of unrelieved blackness he often introduced romantic plots and amusing social tableaux into somber stories. A good illustration of this is what he did with *He Knew He Was Right* (1869), one of his most powerful stories. The main plot, involving Louis Trevelyan, a jealous husband tormented by delusions of his wife's unfaithfulness, is powerful but bleak and harsh. Trollope therefore balances what he thought unpleasant with what he was certain would be welcome—three or four love stories. If the Trevelyans' marriage was breaking up, there would at any rate be many others to take its place. Indeed, Trollope must break into one of the last chapters with a harried little note describing the difficulties in which he has enmeshed himself.

We must now go back to Exeter and look after Mr. Brooke Burgess and Miss Dorothy Stanbury. It is rather hard upon readers that they should be thus hurried from the completion of hymeneals at Florence to the preparations for other hymeneals in Devonshire; but it is the nature of a complex story to be entangled with many weddings towards its close. In this little history there are, we fear, three or four more to come. We will not anticipate by alluding prematurely to Hugh Stanbury's treachery, or death,—or the possibility that he after all may turn out to be the real descendant of the true Lord Peterborough and the actual inheritor of the title and estate of Monkham, nor will we speak of Nora's certain fortitude

under either of these emergencies. But the instructed reader must be aware that Camilla French ought to have a husband found for her; that Colonel Osborne should be caught in some matrimonial trap,—as, how otherwise should he be fitly punished?—and that something should be at least attempted for Priscilla Stanbury, who from the first has been intended to be the real heroine of these pages. That Martha should marry Giles Hickbody, and Barty Burgess run away with Mrs. MacHugh, is of course evident to the meanest novel-expounding capacity; but the fate of Brooke Burgess and of Dorothy will require to be evolved with some delicacy and much detail.<sup>121</sup>

These multiple romances swirl about the steady, spinsterish figure of Aunt Stanbury, who is sharp-tongued and opinionated but wealthy, and therefore to be reckoned with. Such happy fragments of plot, rattling around loosely in a baggy novel, are thoroughly Trollopian. The penniless girl, the brilliant but impecunious young Oxonian, the rascally policeman (very low comedy), the eligible but somewhat ridiculous rector, the eligible and charming young lord who marries the beautiful American girl, whose garrulous father, the American Minister to Italy, is a tryout for the Senator—all these and a dozen others, including the incomparable Miss Wallachia Petrie, the Republican Browning, swell out this leviathan among stories. To keep characters and plots straight from beginning to end is no mean feat of memory. But Trollope has thought it necessary to call to his aid this spreading social panorama for lightly satiric purposes, weighting on the side of amusement a story whose atmosphere threatened to become too dark and wintry.

If in some instances Trollope's tendency to abandon his main plot weakens his novel, in others it provides the strength by which the novel lives. One must write off at once the central plot of *Ralph the Heir* (1871), not for Trollope's reason—that it “justifies that dictum that a novelist after fifty should not write love stories”<sup>122</sup>—but because the intrigue is perversely complicated and loses itself in absurdity.<sup>123</sup> It is true that nothing is done for the novel's reality by the giddy vacillations of Ralph the heir, who teeters uncertainly before a succession of lovers. But this Trollopian idiosyncrasy of plotting has a long history and cannot be associated

with the author's having reached a state of glandular quiescence. Similar stories, earlier and later, were carried out successfully. This one wheezes and sputters to its halting conclusion primarily because the characters, once we get them straight, are discovered to be either ridiculous or comatose.

In *Ralph the Heir* virtually every good thing is concentrated in the under-plot, in which Trollope develops a series of amusing sketches of somewhat disreputable social scenes and types. There is, first of all, the Percycross election, with its serio-comic backing and filling: the pious incantations, the mock solemnity, and the low cunning of a parliamentary contest. Second, there is Ontario Moggs, the Radical, who "held horrible ideas about co-operative associations, the rights of labour, and the welfare of the masses."<sup>124</sup> Moggs is one of the very best minor characters in Trollope and, if Mrs. Proudie is excepted, his only successful imitation of Dickens. Moggs's loud honesty, assertive sense of justice, self-conscious solemnity, and awkwardly intense love for Polly Neeft, make him a never-failing source of amusement. His political speeches at the Cheshire Cheese, which Trollope repudiates, are inimitable. Perhaps one should not expect even a Gladstonian Liberal to accept the principles of this well-behaved fire-eater, but there is little doubt that Ontario Moggs would today be the Labor representative for Percycross. He is assuredly the truest character—but certainly not, as Walpole says, "the loveliest character"<sup>125</sup>—in the novel. How he would repudiate the adjective! *Ralph the Heir* has a few other lively artisans and tradesmen, such as Neeft and Stamm, but they are quite overshadowed by Moggs, who can console himself in parliamentary defeat with the thought that he is lucky in love.

By way of contrast we are offered a vignette of Sir Thomas Underwood, Ralph Newton's lawyer and former Solicitor-General, who retired from active pursuit of his profession to prepare a life of Bacon,<sup>126</sup> of which he never wrote a line. Sir Thomas is a familiar type in academic and literary circles, always engaged in taking notes and shuffling papers but never producing completed work. His counterpart may be found in every literary community: the sensitive, intelligent scholar who has a psychological block that



prevents him from taking the irrevocably committing steps of composition and publication.

Of many of Trollope's novels one remembers only the unfortunate weaknesses. But here the strength of the subplot carries everything before it. As a result, *Ralph the Heir* is genuinely pleasant reading, and the author's bitter judgment of it ("one of the worst novels I have written")<sup>127</sup> is unjustified.

Trollope's most thoroughgoing social satire is *The Way We Live Now* (1875), a book which distills the unrest which had been boiling up within him for some time. It is a statement of his sense of the loss of ethical values in his age and the substitution of the criteria of wealth and power. In 1875 there was almost no one to say a good word for this magnificent book. Most of the critics refused to admit that English people could be as mean, vulgar, tawdry, and self-seeking as Trollope had pictured them, and they charged him with perpetrating a libel on his fellow-citizens. *The Graphic*, to cite a single instance, declared the book "disappointing . . . because of the repulsively disagreeable society to which it introduces us."<sup>128</sup> Apparently John Delane's well-known article in the *Times*, soberly pointing up the existence of the sordid materialism which serves as the basis of Trollope's novel, had not been heeded. It is easier, and less damaging to national self-love, to deny evil than to bestir oneself to root it out. Once again we find the review media, which probably reflect public sentiment, discouraging Trollope from anything but the most cheerful interpretation of current ethics and social history. Nothing in the history of fiction is more tragic than the fact that Trollope was driven from his new position as searching critic of his age back to conventional romance. The whip is never entirely discarded—it flicks out its cutting tongue at unexpected moments—and there runs beneath the surface of the most placid of the later novels a strong current of pessimism, but never again is the lash so merciless. Readers did not care for *The Way We Live Now*.<sup>129</sup>

Today among Trollope students there are no dissenters from the thesis that *The Way We Live Now* is of almost overwhelming power. In fact, it is the only Trollope novel on which there is com-

plete unanimity of critical opinion. Yet it was out of print from 1879 to 1941. Meanwhile even *Castle Richmond* and *The Bertrams* went into new editions. What one appreciates today is not the succession of dramatic scenes, though they are powerful, or the pitiless light in which the motley crowd of London shams and renegades is shown, but rather Trollope's prescience in seizing upon the sagging morality of his age and giving his disgust bitter and angry expression in artistic form. The patterns of profligacy had not yet become clear to most Victorian observers, but from our vantage point of years we can see how Trollope anticipated the current concepts of nineteenth-century ethics, particularly in the breakdown of the moral fibre in matters of business. It may be argued that the predatory businessman is no phenomenon, that pretty greasy bubbles are constantly being blown up. But Trollope and Delane were trying to show that although innocent people are always being cheated, the Victorian swindler was drawing the inexperienced and the weak into his orbit and enticing them to participate in illegal enterprises.

The center of Trollope's picture of business corruption is Augustus Melmotte, who is a symbol of all that is crass and despicable. A comparison of Melmotte and Trollope's earlier villains will serve to show Trollope's development as an artist, for in spite of Melmotte's brutality (witness his treatment of his daughter) and his cold despotism he never becomes a stock figure. Rather, he is a symbol, something very rare in Trollope, of a way of life. In his spiritual emptiness he is a prophet of social disintegration. He prefigures Norris's Curtis Jadwin and Dreiser's Frank Cowperwood in American fiction. It was charged that he is drawn from Dickens's Merdle. This Trollope denied,<sup>130</sup> and I think rightly, for the similarities, though obvious, are superficial. Furthermore, Trollope's purposes are much broader. Escott in 1913 could still call Melmotte "a grotesque and nauseating monstrosity,"<sup>131</sup> but today, so have we fallen, the portrait seems to have nothing of caricature and very little of satire. Perhaps because of the harsh reviews Trollope always spoke hesitantly and apologetically about *The Way We Live*

Now, but his pride in Melmotte was never shaken. All else in the novel might be bad, but this he knew to be good.

We have no difficulty in finding other good things. Dolly Longstaffe and the Beargarden set (Sir Felix Carbury, Lord Grasslough, Lord Nidderdale, and other parasitical members of the dummy railway board) are caught with an almost savage malevolence. Trollope thought he was guilty here of exaggeration, the fault, he said, of all satire.<sup>132</sup> Yet where there is only strict reporting, there is likely to be dullness. Thus, Trollope wrote Mary Holmes, "Mr. Alf's staff are real enough; so real, that there is a dullness in the description of them, as they are devoid of caricature."<sup>133</sup> Another well-written characterization is that of Mrs. Winifred Hurtle, the beautiful and ingratiating American widow of somewhat uncertain past from whom the weak Paul Montague extricates himself with difficulty and without honor. *The Graphic* thought it odd that Trollope should expect us to like her, a judgment which indicates the obstacles that a Victorian novelist had to face.

\*But *The Way We Live Now* is by no means a perfect book. No long novel by Trollope (and this one runs to 400,000 words) is without imperfections of form and structure. Few are as complex in organization, and few are as shapeless as *The Way We Live Now*. In the *Autobiography* Trollope, recognizing the error (which, by the way, the reviews did not note), says, "I almost doubt whether it be not impossible to have two absolutely distinct parts in a novel, and to imbue them both with interest. If they be distinct, the one will seem to be no more than padding to the other."<sup>134</sup> Actually, there are *five* stories: the Melmottes, the Longstaffes, the Carburys, Paul Montague and Winifred Hurtle, and John Crumb and Ruby Ruggles. To the very last Trollope never learned how to turn out a clean, bare narrative. The cluttering up of his best work with irrelevant subplots is tragic. The John Crumb plot, which at one point disappears for 100 pages, could scarcely be less apropos. And the Carburys, alas, are dreadfully dull. This Trollope well understood.<sup>135</sup> Hetta is infinitely tiresome, Sir Felix is a fatuous cad, and Lady Carbury (who is most certainly not, as the Stebbinses think,

a portrait of Trollope's mother) is redeemed from being a ridiculous bore only by being a pitiable incompetent. It might be noted, however, that Robert Louis Stevenson thought her portrait a triumph:

I have just finished [*The Way We Live Now*]; there is only one person in it—no, there are three—who are nice: the wild American woman, and two of the dissipated young men, Dolly and Lord Nidderdale. All the heroes and heroines are just ghastly. But what a triumph is Lady Carbury! That is real, sound, strong, genuine work: the man who could do that, if he had had courage, might have written a fine book; he has preferred to write many readable ones.<sup>136</sup>

One carries away from *The Way We Live Now*, however, not the memory of Trollope's shortcomings but of his triumphant success in a new and more trenchant spirit. In distilling and concentrating almost everything he disliked about his age, Trollope proved that he was not simply a writer of frothy comedies. He had every right to be a bit smug about this novel, but he contented himself with saying in his whimsical undertone, "I do not look upon the book as one of my failures."<sup>137</sup>

Professor David Stryker has recently pointed out that in the two novels which preceded *The American Senator* (1877), Trollope was intent upon a social commentary.<sup>138</sup> *The Way We Live Now* attacked, in Trollope's phrase, "the commercial profligacy of the age," and *The Prime Minister* defined a perfect gentleman. Actually, *Is He Popenjoy?* was written between these two novels; but Stryker's point is not invalidated, for *Popenjoy* is in part an expression of concern over the emptiness of aristocratic life, the barrenness of the feminists, and the vulgar meddling of sirens and matchmakers. Some years before, Trollope had been a visitor in the United States and had recorded in *North America* views and opinions that were often tart and sometimes caustic. Now in *The American Senator* he reverses the process, showing Englishmen how they appear in foreign eyes and perhaps again expiating his mother's still unforgiven offenses.

One would have expected an explosion of honest national wrath

over the loud indiscretions of the undiplomatic representative, but no such thing occurred. On the contrary, most reviewers thought the Senator's barbed questions and acid observations quite the best thing in the novel. Trollope was right in persisting with the present title against the advice of his publishers.<sup>139</sup> Even though, as one critic put it, the Senator disappears for a volume at a time, he remains the challenging figure of the novel. In the reviews that I have seen about two-thirds of the space given the novel is devoted to comments on the needling, if not actual puncturing, of hallowed British institutions by the Senator from Mickewa. Many reviewers decided that some of the most deflating remarks made a good deal of sense and welcomed the opportunity to examine critically certain political anomalies and ecclesiastical abuses.

One or two journals, winding solemn horns, blew sour notes, but less prosy critics chuckled at the Senator's candid (and certainly impolite) appraisal of his hosts. That Trollope intended to present Mr. Gotobed as an honorable and intelligent, if prejudiced, critic of English society is evident from a remark to Mary Holmes that "he is a thoroughly honest man wishing to do good, and is not himself half so absurd as the things he criticizes."<sup>140</sup> The Senator is, in fact, a kind of latter-day Matthew Bramble, whose empiricism and rude common sense, crabbed sarcasms and genuinely felt humanitarianism, perverse bluntness of speech and dedicated idealism combine to make him one of Trollope's memorable characters.

Another study which brings one back to *The American Senator* is Arabella Trefoil, Trollope's best satirical sketch of the pursuing female. Arabella is an adventuress who loses no time in jilting a man with £7,000 a year when she hears of another one in the neighborhood with £40,000. She is a devoted social climber whose only ambition is to overwhelm and then to snub other women. Her sole interest in the marriage which she pursues so relentlessly lies in its possibilities for social display. She is not only cold but—and this is important, for she represents almost everything that Trollope hated in women<sup>141</sup>—she is frigid: she "did not want any man to be in love with her,—except as far as might be sufficient for the purpose of marriage."<sup>142</sup> The Senator's belief in Arabella was one of his

greatest delusions. "Miss Trefoil," he remarked, "always gave me the idea of being a good type of English aristocracy."<sup>143</sup> One might think this irony, but a moment later he is "startled" to discover that Arabella is not popular at Rufford Hall. Trollope does not change his mind about Arabella, but he was capable of a humorous note about her in a letter to Anna Steele:

Will such a one as Arabella Trefoil be damned, and if so why? Think of her virtues; how she works, how true she is to her vocation, how little there is of self indulgence, or idleness. I think that she will go to a kind of third class heaven in which she will always be getting third class husbands.<sup>144</sup>

*The American Senator* is an unruly book, with three full plots plus the Dan Goarly hunting episodes. It is much too long, though it runs to hardly more than one half the length of four or five other novels. But the problem is not so much mere length as the absence of tense writing and clipped dramatic construction. Two good characters and four walls, Trollope needed to remind himself (a glance at his beloved Jane Austen would have been enough), may make a masterpiece; but three and a half maundering plots are an invitation to disaster. That *The American Senator* is not a disaster is owing entirely to Elias Gotobed and Arabella Trefoil.

It may be seen from his essay on "The Higher Education of Women" that Trollope deprecated the idea that woman's place is anywhere but in the home. If anti-feminist prejudices were simply an idiosyncrasy outside his creative life, such as his aversion to competitive examinations, they would have only the interest that attaches to the vagrant whims of talented men. But this position was no mere passing fancy; Trollope maintained it consistently throughout his life. It profoundly influenced his concept of the function of men and women in society, and, in particular, it determined the character of the heroines of his novels. From time to time he introduced into the later books bitter anti-feminist portraits. I should like to glance at several of these while canvassing the subject further before proceeding to the final satiric sketches.

Trollope was quite convinced that God in his infinite wisdom had

determined on two very different destinies for the sexes. Furthermore, he held that any attempt to circumvent or negate the divine fiat would be certainly unwise and possibly downright sacrilegious. It was clear that Providence had given man his strength that he might be the bread-winner for his family, and that Providence had given woman her sensibility and her maternal and domestic instincts that through the love which she inspired she might hold the family together. A redefinition of this appointed order by arbitrary interference would be no less than tragic. To Adrian H. Joline, an American correspondent who had asked for a clarification of his views, Trollope wrote:

You say that it would be dangerous to interfere with the 'family arrangement.' I think it is impossible to do so to any great extent. You cannot, by Act of Congress or Parliament make the woman's arm as strong as the man's or deprive her of her position as the bearer of children. We may trouble ourselves much by debating a question which superior power has settled for us, but we cannot alter the law. To avoid, or lessen that trouble, it is I think expedient to explain and make manifest to all, the facts as they have been settled for us by that superior power,—not as doubting what may be the result. The necessity of the supremacy of man is as certain to me as the eternity of the soul. . . .<sup>145</sup>

The feminist movement has a very long history, but in no other period than in the mid-nineteenth century were its principles the subject of more widespread and more acrimonious debate. Feminism was a reform, and both in England and in America at this time "reform" was a charmed word. The secret of translating one's private desires into fact was to get them labeled a reform. Nevertheless, reforms often met bitter opposition from those whose interests were involved and from those whose innate conservatism made them wary of any change. Trollope's stand against feminism had been taken before it became one of the burning issues of the late 1860's, and in both his novels and his travel books he was accustomed to take note of the aspirations of women and to predict the misfortunes which their realization would entail.

The target of Trollope's attacks on feminism was the proposition that some other career than marriage may properly be open to

women. He was convinced that nothing is better calculated to defeat God's purposes than spinsterhood, which frustrates woman by channeling her energies out of their natural course, and also antagonizes man, with whom she enters into competition for gainful employment. Most important, of course, is the psychological dislocation which results when woman arrogates to herself the prerogatives of men. She loses the softness, the tenderness, the *spirituelle* qualities of mind and heart which are chief among the graces with which she has been endowed. She becomes brash and noisy, opinionated and assertive. To Trollope a mannish woman was anathema. Believing in the complementary function of the sexes, he could not condone the actions of a woman who wished to step out of the natural order of her kind. Nature strives to create and maintain an equilibrium in the ratio of the sexes. The so-called emancipation of women would, he thought, destroy this balance. Marriage is woman's one career. Her only legitimate study is to be a loving wife and a good mother. This has been ordained by One from whose voice there is no appeal.

When a girl asks herself that question,—what shall she do with her life? it is so natural that she should answer it by saying that she will get married, and give her life to somebody else. It is a woman's one career—let women rebel against the edict as they may; and though there may be word-rebellion here and there, women learn the truth early in their lives. And women know it later in life when they think of their girls; and men know it, too, when they have to deal with their daughters. Girls, too, now acknowledge aloud that they have learned the lesson; and Saturday Reviewers and others blame them for their lack of modesty in doing so,—most unreasonably, most uselessly, and, as far as the influence of such censors may go, most perniciously. Nature prompts the desire, the world acknowledges its ubiquity, circumstances show that it is reasonable, the whole theory of creation requires it. . . .<sup>148</sup>

Such thoughts as there were on Trollope's mind when in 1868 he was writing *The Vicar of Bullhampton*.

It is characteristic of the Victorian novelist to remember how large a segment of the reading public was composed of young ladies and to address himself in large measure to the prejudices of that



group. He is sometimes accused of a weak capitulation to a lightly armed but very noisy enemy. Trollope is to some extent vulnerable to this charge. But it should be noted that the moral implications of his novels are part of a consistent philosophy looking toward the preservation of woman's place as the spiritual leader in the home and in the community.

It was a firmly held conviction with Trollope that woman would not be a moral and spiritual leader if she insisted too peremptorily on her "rights." He was fearful lest women should reject motherhood, a high calling sanctified by God and nature, in favor of the stage or the lecture platform. William Butler Yeats loved Maud Gonne, but because she interested herself too strenuously in political matters he was driven to imply that she was "an old bellows full of angry wind." Trollope was pretty sure that his gifted young friend Kate Field was going to founder upon the rock of a public career on the rostrum. He wrote her avuncular letters in which he urged her to "go marry a husband." Instead she became a rather aggressive spinster, popular for her platform talents. When in 1877 she sent Trollope her paper on "Woman in the Lyceum," he did not attempt to hide his disapproval of her thesis.

All your points can be argued pro & con as to women lecturing;—but you do not, I think, catch the objections which are made;—that oratory is connected deeply with forensic, parliamentary, and pulpit pursuits for which women are unfitted because they are wanted elsewhere;—because in such pursuits a man is taken from his home, and because she is wanted at home. . . .<sup>147</sup>

Trollope carried his objection to strong-minded women into his novels. *He Knew He Was Right* was begun in England late in 1867, but a large part of it was written in the United States in the following spring, at which time Trollope was seeing Kate Field frequently and corresponding with her regularly. The story is set in Italy, and one of the subplots introduces Jonas Spalding, the American Minister to that country. Spalding has with him two nieces, one of whom, Caroline, is a very attractive and very charming girl. Trollope had a personal interest, one may guess, in his American heroine, for this segment of his story was probably written for Kate. It is more

than possible that Caroline Spalding is the gay, unspoiled Kate Field whom Trollope had first met in Florence in 1860. It is also possible that another character in the novel, Wallachia Petrie, the Republican Browning, is what Trollope in 1868 feared that Kate might become. Wallachia is an insufferably loud feminist, a man-hating lecturer with violent and irrational antipathies. Trollope must have intimated to Kate the significance of his little allegory, for she protested, and he replied in a letter dated April 15, 1870: "I never said you were like W. Petrie. I said that that young woman did not entertain a single opinion on public matters which you could repudiate. . . ." <sup>148</sup> Trollope admired the cleverness of American girls as much as he admired their beauty, but he perhaps agreed with his character Louis Trevelyan, who says that "they want the weakness which a woman ought to have." <sup>149</sup> Caroline is attractive because she combines American independence of character with English femininity. Women become strong-minded, it would appear, at the expense of their femininity.

Trollope returned to the subject of women's rights in *Is He Popenjoy?*, written in 1874-75. Part of this novel is given over to a rather heavy-minded satire on embattled advocates of feminism. The Baroness Banmann is a Bavarian who is brought to London to lecture at the "Rights of Women Institute: Established for the Relief of the Disabilities of Females." She is another Miss Petrie, a formidable, pseudo-intellectual harridan: ". . . a very stout woman, about fifty, with a double chin, a considerable moustache, a low, broad forehead, and bright, round, black eyes, very far apart." All her organizational and forensic talents prove insufficient, however, to save the institute from the control of Olivia Q. Fleabody, an obnoxious American spinster of the same persuasion, whose determined silliness is emphasized by her Ph.D. degree. By this time Trollope had pumped himself dry and exhausted his inventiveness in the imaginative treatment of the subject, but he clung tenaciously to the idea of woman's divinely appointed charge as the symbol of the domestic virtues and the inspirer of the domestic affections.

In the year of his death Anthony Trollope, the arch-realist of his generation, published a novel which an unobservant reader today

might take to be a work by Samuel Butler or H. G. Wells. *The Fixed Period* (1882) is not, however, a scientific romance, and I think Sadleir's brief comment,<sup>150</sup> which makes it appear utopian and prophetic, is somewhat misleading. The setting is an island off Australia (probably New Zealand, as in *Erewhon*) one hundred years hence. A group of persons who have renounced English sovereignty have established a new government, one of whose principles is the "Fixed Period," which provides that citizens who have reached the age of 67 shall be sent for one year to a "college," where they will live in comfort. At the expiration of that time they will submit to euthanasia. On the day upon which the first man, now very reluctant, is to be committed, a British destroyer enters the harbor, trains a heavy gun on the capital, and suggests that the renegade colony recognize the British Government, a request with which the inhabitants are very happy to comply.

Many years ago Gamaliel Bradford noted<sup>151</sup> a parallel between Trollope's novel and *The Old Law*, a rather coarse seventeenth-century play by Massinger and others. Trollope did, indeed, read the play—on July 8, 1876, to be exact. It describes the political action of Evander, a duke, who revives an ancient law calling for the death of women at age 60 and men at age 80. Ultimately the duke rescinds the edict, announcing that his purpose has been only to test the character of his subjects. If Trollope found in the play his suggestion for the novel, as is likely, he uses it simply as the Jamesian *donnée*. There are no other likenesses, and there is nothing in Trollope's manuscript comment on the play to indicate that he thought it might be useful to him.

Just what Trollope intended by his fantasy is not always clear, but it seems to be a satire on social planning, a kind of modest proposal for the continuance of the status quo. Thackeray had been appalled by the miseries of the Struldbrugs, who find an impotent immortality to be worse than death. But Trollope does not think the solution is to be found in euthanasia at a fixed period. Such a narrative as he devises to objectify his thinking could be effective only with a strong infusion of Swiftian humor or with something of the bitter irony of Huxley or George Orwell. There is nothing of

this kind. Such humor as one finds is strained and repetitious. Abundant as was his gift for satire on conduct and manners—that is, *people*—he had no talent for satire on *ideas*. He always tumbled into the grotesqueries of *Brown, Jones and Robinson* and, apparently, *The New Zealander*. One must record, in honesty, that *The Fixed Period* is a very dull novel.

Nevertheless, the reviewers were kind. No one condemned the book, and most of the critics seemed to agree with the judgment of the *Athenaeum* that *The Fixed Period* is “an amusing *jeu d’esprit*.”<sup>152</sup> There was one repercussion in 1905 that deserves to be noted. In February of that year Sir William Osler gave a valedictory address at the Johns Hopkins University, in the course of which he referred approvingly to Anthony Trollope’s “charming novel *The Fixed Period*.” He went on to say that he was heartily in favor of Trollope’s scheme. What he had intended as a jest was taken seriously, and the newspapers the following day carried such headlines as “Osler Recommends Chloroform at Sixty.” In the next few weeks Osler received thousands of indignant letters, and the press perpetuated the controversy for some time.<sup>153</sup> In consequence, many persons read *The Fixed Period* who had never before heard of Trollope, and the bibliography of references which it has called forth is one of the longest among all of Trollope’s novels. But I can think of no greater irony than that Anthony Trollope should be known to some readers only as “the author of *The Fixed Period*.”

At the time of Trollope’s death there was appearing serially *Mr. Scarborough’s Family* (1883), a novel which is undoubtedly one of his triumphs, though I should call it minor rather than major. It is a final essay in satire. The subject is property and its influence upon family relationships, and the treatment is cynical, derisive, and Mephistophelian. There is no one like Mr. Scarborough in all of Trollope. In fact, there is no one like him in English literature, except perhaps in the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, Trollope’s favorite reading. Mr. Scarborough had gone through two marriage ceremonies, one before and one after the birth of his eldest son, Mountjoy. He is therefore in a position to declare Mountjoy illegitimate and settle the estate on Augustus, the younger son. When

Mountjoy, an amiable Rawdon Crawley of an army officer, proves to be an inveterate gambler who has already pledged most of the estate in post-obits to the moneylenders, Mr. Scarborough does just that. But Augustus shows an eagerness to come into his inheritance that enrages the old man, who restores the status quo and dies. Mountjoy, again in funds, is last seen on his way to Monte Carlo, and as the novel closes one can imagine a chorus of leering devils playing an impish obligato to Trollope's sardonic music.

Reviewers were bewildered by Mr. Scarborough, who is indeed several sizes larger than life and more fiendishly ingenious than the people one meets socially. He offended the Victorian sense of realism. The *Spectator* solemnly protested, "We cannot say that we think such a character possible." Since Trollope was the creator of very human prime ministers and very sweet young ladies, he was not to be permitted an exercise in the esoteric. Mr. Scarborough was either an absurd caricature or an unfortunate failure in realism. Had the reviewers recalled Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* or Middleton's *A Trick to Catch the Old One* or Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Elder Brother* or even Jonson's *Volpone*, they would not have been so confounded by this scheming old man, who while literally dying by inches at the surgeon's blade, persists with a fierce Voltairean energy to have his own perverse way. The critics might at the same time have considered the possible relation of *Mr. Scarborough's Family* to the morality plays, for nowhere else in Trollope's work is a complete novel so susceptible of an allegorical interpretation. But neither they nor anyone else knew that the early English drama was the great passion of his life. So they stood agape before the complex sophistries of deception and self-deception practiced by this terrible old man who set at defiance all the accepted laws of morality.

Not all of the novel, however, is written in a mood of desperate raillery. There is much that is good-humored and even raucously funny, as for example, the meeting of Mountjoy's creditors at Gurney and Malcolmson's in Red Lion Square, where the holders of Mountjoy's paper learn that Mr. Scarborough has been too sharp for them and raise their voices in anguished expostulation and dis-

may. Mr. Juniper and Mr. Tyrrwhit do not have the philosophical resources of Mr. Hart, who shrugs off the disaster with, "Vell, vell! This vorld's a queer place." <sup>154</sup> I am not sure that this quick change of tone is justified, but if Trollope was drawing subconsciously on the early drama, the comic relief is too familiar a pattern for comment. It is, at any rate, well done.

But—there is always a *but*—Trollope must have his love story, at whatever peril to the spirit of his novel. The Florence Mountjoy-Harry Annesley romance is a particularly disruptive element here, where the main plot is at total variance with commonplace and conventional behavior. The best that can be said is that there are several clever sketches, such as Peter Prosper, Harry's uncle, who is a source of much amusement when he decides to replace Harry in Florence's affections, and when he pursues the brewery heiress Matilda Thoroughbung (we are now deep in Dickensian farce), who soon cools him by her canny insistence on managing her own finances. In *The Kellys* or *The Three Clerks* such nonsense would be welcome. In *Mr. Scarborough's Family* it has the effect of staking to the ground a work that might have soared.

It may now perhaps be seen more clearly to what extent Trollope called upon social studies for the materials of his novels. Whether in factual accounts of Irish economics, in painstakingly accurate vignettes of familiar English types, or in cutting satirical sketches of people and things he disliked, Trollope used the contemporary social scene frequently and with generally happy results.

✻ PART TWO

Trollope and the Craft of Fiction





## 4 THEORY AND TRADITION

IN ONE of his novels Trollope gives to the Duke of Omnium a speech which touches on the satisfactions which life held for him.

Cicero and Ovid have told us that to literature only could they look for consolation in their banishment. But then they speak of a remedy for sorrow, not of a source of joy. No young man should dare to neglect literature. At some period of his life he will surely need consolation. And he may be certain that should he live to be an old man, there will be none other,—except religion. But for that feeling of self-contentment, which creates happiness—hard work, and hard work alone, can give it to you.<sup>1</sup>

Though the Duke's son Gerald is a bit amused at the way his very practical father brushes off the possibility that the pleasures of literature can be meaningful for the young, there is little doubt that Trollope is here in his last years looking back over his life and assessing its values. The dignity of work and the aesthetic stimulus of literature—these had been the sustaining satisfactions of half a century. The union of the active and the contemplative life was for him not an unattainable ideal but a reality.

The importance in Trollope's philosophy of the concept of work has already been glanced at.<sup>2</sup> I wish now to give some account of Trollope's reading, of the traditions in the novel to which he was drawn, and of the critical principles which he brought to bear upon novelists from Defoe to George Eliot. It should be said first that, unlike the Duke of Omnium, Trollope *always* found reading a source of joy. Despite the acknowledged inadequacies of his education, the insistencies of his official positions, and the distractions of London,

he was always, from his earliest days, close to the world of books. He was not a diarist or journal writer, and his letters give little evidence of his reading habits. Some of his biographers have therefore fallen into the error of thinking him ill-read. It is significant, however, that among those of his private papers which have survived virtually all that do not concern matters of business have reference to his reading. We are told in the *Autobiography* that Trollope destroyed his early journal, kept from his fifteenth to his twenty-fifth year. There survives, however, an unpublished commonplace book dating from 1835 to 1840. These pages, which constitute the earliest extant writing in his hand, are largely an account of his reading experiences. There also survive a few manuscript sheets which record his extensive program of reading aloud to his wife from the autumn of 1876 until a few months before his death. Early and late, therefore, his literary studies were important enough to draw from him a written account. And even in the middle years, those of his heaviest responsibilities, he by no means neglected the creative artist's instinct to study the masterpieces of his craft. He projected a history of English fiction, he tells us,<sup>3</sup> in the late 1850's, by which time, presumably, his reading in the novel was sufficiently wide to make the idea of such an ambitious scheme appear attractive. For twenty years (1850-53, 1866-82) he was busily engaged in his enormous task of reading the sixteenth and seventeenth-century drama. Thus, only a very brief period in terms of a reading program is unaccounted for; it would surely be curious if the pattern of the other years was markedly different.

When in 1843 Trollope wrote the first pages of *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* there lay behind him a century of the English novel. The heritage was rich and varied, though the novels themselves were often loose, even chaotic, in structure and susceptible of ordered, patterned development by only exceptional talents. The evidence of Trollope's library catalogue indicates a sweeping interest in the eighteenth-century novel, his shelves containing, among a mass of other material, the fifty-volume set of *British Novelists*. But his published comments do not show much sympathy for the acknowledged great among his early predecessors. Defoe's *Roxana*

is "an accurate example of what a bad book may be."<sup>4</sup> Juvenal was "a most lascivious writer," and Fielding is "open to the same reproach."<sup>5</sup> In Smollett "the fault was more conspicuous than in Fielding—without the great redeeming gifts."<sup>6</sup> Sterne should be relegated to some distant corner of the library shelves, and "the less often he is taken down the better."<sup>7</sup> The only novelist whose work he approved was Richardson, who wrote "that he might do good to those for whom he was writing."<sup>8</sup>

In only one of the popular eighteenth-century fictional types did Trollope show any interest. The novel of sentiment and the Gothic novel were clearly out of his orbit. The novel of ideas, illustrated by the work of the doctrinaires Godwin, Bage, and Holcroft, he might well have found stimulating (they were represented in his library), but no comments on their work survive. More important to him was the novel of common life, destined to become not only the characteristic English novel of the nineteenth century but the prototype for his own work. This form probably owes its origin to Richardson, but its growth and development are the result of a new force: the emergence of the woman novelist. Drawing on the store of somewhat scanty experience which eighteenth-century life permitted a woman, this new writer turned naturally to the domestic scene for her material. She wrote of love intrigue, of marriage, of morals, of education, of simple country folk, of the glitter of society, of the comedy of social manners. Her world was not so wide as that of her brother novelist, but she had studied it more closely, and at her best she reproduced it more faithfully. Unfortunately, however, she was not always at her best. In moments of relaxed attention she fell into attitudes of maiden-aunt prissiness, from which she descended to the bathos of moral anecdotes and ethical charades. The contribution of the woman novelist is therefore of varying merit: on the score of her suggestion that the dramatic moments of life take place within the human heart, she pointed the novel toward a realism which it had not previously known; but in interpreting her findings in a didactic mood she gave the novel that tinge of pale femininity which was not to fade for many generations.

The three principal novelists in this category are, as everyone

knows, Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen. Miss Burney in *Evelina* (1778), her *chef d'oeuvre*, stays within the familiar epistolary pattern and does not wander far from Richardsonian sentiment; but she is honest and good-humored, and she has a keen eye for the incongruities of social juxtaposition. Miss Edgeworth is of greater interest to the student of Trollope, for it was she who first saw the fictional possibilities of the Irish peasant. There were many Irish stories before *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, particularly those of William Carleton; yet it is not too much to say that none of these would have been as we know them without *Castle Rackrent* (1800) and *The Absentee* (1812), the novels which established Miss Edgeworth as the most important genre painter and local colorist of her day. Scott's well-known praise of her Irish regional sense is fully justified, but her English stories are vapid and tamely moralistic.

It is to Jane Austen, one is convinced, that Trollope owed most. Scholarship, in its persistent and perhaps wrongheaded attempt to trace sources, often finds influences where only like-mindedness exists. In this instance, however, we have Trollope's own word that until the publication of *Henry Esmond* (1852) he considered *Pride and Prejudice* "the best novel in the English language."<sup>9</sup> This is not the place to detail the qualities which these two delightful novelists had in common, but no one who has read Miss Austen will fail to hear in conversations from Barsetshire rectories echoes of dialogue from her drawing-room. She cared nothing for plot and very little for "ideas," but she had an absorbing interest in men and women. If her reading of human nature seems to be primarily humorous, it is only because innuendo was her favorite literary device. She would have understood a remark by Robert Frost: "Style is the way a man takes himself. If it is with outer seriousness, it must be with inner humor. If it is with outer humor, it must be with inner seriousness." Jane Austen was not a frivolous writer. She accepted responsibilities to her craft when other novelists were indifferent, and she did not forget her responsibilities to society, though she was too much an artist to discharge these in any obvious and preachy way. But her chief contribution to the novel lay

in the proof of her conviction of the importance of small things. Two or three families in a village, she thought, would suffice for the materials of a novel. No earlier writer had dared to be so simple. One can scarcely exaggerate the significance for fiction of her discovery. The picaresque tradition, from which the English novel largely took its origin, insisted on "adventures." In exposing the fallacy behind this dictum Jane Austen both freed the novel from the incubus of overplotting and showed how the subtleties of characterization in a situational problem could profitably substitute for the narrative interest that might seem to be lost. With one span she almost bridged the gap between Defoe and Henry James. Many novelists were to fall into the chasm for some time afterwards, but Jane Austen had shown the best way out. Trollope was an apt pupil, and he followed the leader with confidence.

The publication of the Waverly Novels is probably the most important event in the history of fiction, for however contemporary criticism may depreciate Scott as a writer, the prosperity of the novel in the Victorian age and since is in large part his accomplishment. He was a storyteller, not a Jamesian artist. He knew nothing of restricting the point of view, of dramatizing discursive philosophy, of presenting character from the inside. Of the principles of the well-made novel he knew nothing, for they had not yet been set down. No novelist illustrates more beautifully the "misplaced middle." But what he wrote enabled his readers to see and even vicariously to live through the great days of English and Scottish history. He recreated the color of stirring scenes and the drama of tremendous events. He made the past more real, more vivid, than the present. It was a magnificent accomplishment. Literary history records no other instance in which a writer seized so firmly upon the imagination of men. In assessing the Victorian heritage one can make no greater mistake than to undervalue the influence of Scott.

Trollope's work, however, is not at all like Scott's, and one must therefore search out the reason for his enthusiasm. It is to be found, I believe, in a recognition of like purposes. Trollope too was a storyteller, a "tale-spinner," as he always wryly described himself. Like

Scott's, his aims were not transcendent: he chose to interest, to amuse, and to edify a variety of readers with a variety of spirited characters and scenes. In spite of fundamental differences in subject matter these two writers saw the function of the novel in much the same terms. The evidence of this relationship is, of course, best found in *La Vendée* (1850). Such was Trollope's admiration for Scott's achievement and such in general was the force of the historical tradition that before staking out claims in his own territory he paid tribute to Sir Walter with *La Vendée*, a sincere but almost unreadable novel of the France of Louis XVI.

In Ireland, a country whose importance in Trollope's life and work we have already seen, there were two active traditions in the novel. One concerned itself with English oppressions and the misery of the tenant farmers. Gerald Griffin in *The Collegians* (1829), William Carleton in *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1832), and John and Michael Banim in their *O'Hara Tales* (1825) all spread a heavy layer of melodrama over a realistic descriptive base. Theirs was a kind of early naturalism rendered abortive by romantic plotting. They carried on the social philosophy of Miss Edgeworth with the advantages that go with the first-hand knowledge of a native, but they lacked her delicacy of perception and her emotional balance. The other tradition was that of folk comedy, including and often developing around the "stage Irishman," a fanciful character manufactured chiefly for the foreign trade. He is seen in Samuel Lover's *Handy Andy* (1842) and in *Harry Lorrequer* (1837) and other early novels of Trollope's friend Charles Lever. These books are not so much novels as collections of jests, anecdotes, and absurd incidents, of which the hoax and the row usually climax the action in an atmosphere of hard drinking and spirited love-making. Lever is very clever, even brilliantly funny in spots, but when the narrative pace slackens and the humor gives way to exposition, the undistinguished prose is all too obvious. The episodic quality of his narratives precluded characterization, and high seriousness was a virtue of which he obviously had no knowledge; but with all their faults his novels are still good reading. Where else shall one look for such perpetual high spirits, such

contagious good temper, such an ingratiating *joie de vivre*? If the man was gayer and livelier than his work, no wonder Trollope loved Charles Lever.

Trollope's commonplace book contains an unpublished critique on Bulwer which indicates that at the age of twenty-five the future author of social studies in fiction was carefully examining the "silver-fork" novel of fashionable life. As practiced by Bulwer, Disraeli, and Mrs. Gore, this was an artificial form describing an artificial society, but it was not without a kind of negative influence in promoting sounder work. Trollope found it "deficient in human nature" and "crowded with high-stilted absurdities." Largely descriptive in purpose and technique, the novel of fashionable life was written in a passive mood—a static reproduction of aristocratic life, complete in wearisome detail. Ornate houses, officious servants, heavy foods, expensive clothes, dreary entertainment, the tinsel of small talk—all this is reproduced with a Balzacian thoroughness which Trollope learned to avoid. The novel of life above-stairs is not entirely original with the silver-fork school, for there is something of this tradition as early as Maria Edgeworth's *Tales of Fashionable Life* (1809–12). Even Hook's formal plots are often set in a carefully cultivated atmosphere of social fatuity. But Disraeli in *Vivian Grey* (1826–27) and Bulwer in *Pelham* (1828) may be said to have established the tone of the silver-fork novel. Lesser writers, who chiefly carried on the type, did not move in aristocratic circles, and consciously or unconsciously they expressed their envy of a way of life which many of them were never to know. This is not true, however, of Mrs. Catherine Gore, who scarcely deserved Thackeray's wicked burlesque in *Novels by Eminent Hands*. She knew the people and the scenes she described, and she was by no means blind to the implications of their shallow social philosophy. Her approach, indeed, is frequently satiric, and an ironic undertone is one of her most effective devices. She was no mere imitator, but a sensitive social recorder. Her jaunty description of herself as a "good flippant writer" is by no means inaccurate. In *Mrs. Armytage* (1836) and *The Dowager* (1840) she is perhaps closer to Jane Austen than to Bulwer and Disraeli, and her understanding of the

internecine social struggles behind the bland façade of London society anticipates both *Vanity Fair* and the Barsetshire novels.

Among the other pre-Victorian forms none is of great importance in Trollope's development. The predecessors of Dickens—Hook, Egan, and Surtees—he did not care for, though he could scarcely have failed to enjoy the hunting episodes in Surtees. The Newgate or crime novel of Ainsworth and Bulwer he despised; in fact, he never tired of attacking *Jack Sheppard*, which he thought a dangerous book. For obvious reasons he was not attracted to the popular picaresque romance of Eastern or Oriental experience, and the Smollettian romance of Marryat was similarly not to his taste. But if these types were of no direct influence, they indirectly helped to channel Trollope's attention into congenial areas of the novel. Most important, perhaps, they served usefully to provide the healthy climate in which the novel was growing. In 1843 fiction was in the most virile period of its youth. A talented storyteller could come to his apprenticeship at no more fortunate time. Behind him lay a strong tradition. The novel had shown itself to be not only the most popular but the most adaptable form that literature had known. Its potential of growth was limitless. Yet it was scarcely an art form. Virtually nothing existed that could be called literary criticism in the field of the novel. The young writer could not expect direction. He must learn by doing and by correcting his mistakes. Only a writer of small vision, however, could have failed to see stirring opportunities, both in the way of fresh story material and in the treatment of that material. At such a fortunate moment in the history of fiction Anthony Trollope began to write.

The principles with which Trollope approached the novel in 1843 he clung to tenaciously throughout his life. They may be seen in one of the earliest critical expressions that survives—the unpublished essay on Bulwer referred to above—where emerge the three criteria he habitually applied to fiction: a sound moral and ethical tone, the avoidance of the sensational in plot, and realistic characterization. In a later chapter I shall have occasion to note in some detail Trollope's own practice with regard to the elements of fiction as he understood them. It will suffice here to glance at the manner in



which his concept of the function and the materials of the novel determined his judgment of individual writers.

It must be admitted that Trollope's criticism is often impressionistic, his approach to literature more subjective than objective. But surely Walpole overstated Trollope's vagaries: "Trollope . . . was no aesthetic critic of letters. He knew what he liked and what he did not like, but his reasons were merely personal and moral."<sup>10</sup> Such a statement equates Trollope with Anatole France, but such a comparison is misleading. Trollope did have a number of fixed principles. He was not wholly subject to passing whims. Though he said of the writing of fiction, "I am not sure that I have as yet got the rules quite settled in my own mind,"<sup>11</sup> his modest disclaimer, coming after a lifetime of study and practice of the art of the novel, should not be read as a denial of standards. He had standards and was generally consistent in their application, but now and again the subjective approach dominates the objective, the emotional supersedes the judicial. Trollope stands midway between the superficial impressionism of Anatole France and the steady classicism of Matthew Arnold.

As Walpole notes, however, and as we have seen, the moral atmosphere of a work strongly influences Trollope's opinion of it. The object of a novel, he said, "should be to instruct in morals while it amuses."<sup>12</sup> This is not a casual comment. He believed profoundly that the novelist must fill the offices of teacher and clergyman as well as that of entertainer, and he repeated this opinion every time he wrote about his profession. In the *Autobiography* he states:

The novelist, if he have a conscience, must preach his sermons with the same purpose as the clergyman, and must have his own system of ethics. If he can do this efficiently, if he can make virtue alluring and vice ugly, while he charms his readers instead of wearying them, then I think Mr. Carlyle need not call him distressed, nor talk of that long ear of fiction, nor question whether he be or not the most foolish of existing mortals.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, he held that not only was the novelist in a favorable position to reach the widest possible public, but the effectiveness of

his teaching was unrivaled. "I am inclined to think," he said, "that the lessons inculcated by the novelists at present go deeper than most others."<sup>14</sup> The lessons he had in mind are as homely and platitudinous as the moral law must ever be. Trollope was never deterred from enunciating a truism by the thought that it had been said before. He hoped that through his pictures of the lives of ordinary people he "might succeed in impregnating the mind of the novel-reader with a feeling that honesty is the best policy; that truth prevails while falsehood fails; that a girl will be loved as she is pure, and sweet, and unselfish; that a man will be honoured as he is true, and honest, and brave of heart; that things meanly done are ugly and odious, and things nobly done beautiful and gracious." Of course, the novelist must not show his hand. Instruction is "like a snake in the grass, like physic beneath the sugar. . . . It is the test of a novel writer's art that he conceals his snake-in-the-grass; but the reader may be sure that it is always there."<sup>15</sup>

The opening pages of Trollope's projected history of English fiction<sup>16</sup> and his lecture on "English Prose Fiction as a Rational Amusement"<sup>17</sup> offer further proof of his concern over the moral tone of a novel. For him no artistic merit offsets indecency. Many of his curious opinions are intelligible only on this premise. His antipathy to Defoe, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne is not a denial of their genius, but an indictment of their morality. In his own day, he admitted, fiction had taken a better turn; he could find no fault with the most eminent Victorians. But there were still a few backsliders, such as Ainsworth and Disraeli. For the author of *Vivian Grey*, Trollope reserved his bitterest criticism. In describing without censure successful men who rise in the world through other means than hard work and the cultivation of integrity, Disraeli was an unsalutary influence.<sup>18</sup> In a letter to Mary Holmes, Trollope speaks of *Lothair* as "the most snobbish book I ever read."<sup>19</sup> He argued seriously that the novelist worth his salt must take advantage of the opportunities for moral suasion: "I regard him who can put himself into close communication with young people year after year without making some attempt to do them good as a very sorry fellow indeed."<sup>20</sup> Yet there is a twinkle in his commendation of Maria

Edgeworth and Jane Austen, who "were the first to convince the British matron that her darling girl might be amused without injury to her purity."<sup>21</sup>

I do not wish to urge a defense of Trollope at this point, but it may be said that the moral issue does not often *alone* determine his critical judgments. Also, it should be noted, he insisted merely that the proposition be good; the proof might well entail matters that many people would find objectionable. He was less squeamish, in fact, than many of his contemporaries among novelists and critics. When Lady Wood's *Sorrow on the Sea* was attacked by the *Athenaeum* as immoral, he rushed to her defense.<sup>22</sup> And his altercation with Thackeray, who turned down as improper one of his stories for the *Cornhill Magazine*, is well known.<sup>23</sup>

To turn to his views on plot, Trollope, the realist, opposed the selection of plot materials favored by Dickens and the "sensation novelists." He held that "great and glowing incidents," though they may interest, will not "come home to the minds of readers."<sup>24</sup> The stagy and melodramatic he consistently repudiated. His antipathy to Mrs. Stowe, for example, has its root in his perception of the "falsely sensational" in her novels.<sup>25</sup> Plot was simply not important for Trollope; yet he praised Fielding, who "in the construction of a story . . . is supreme among novelists,"<sup>26</sup> and hailed *Oliver Twist* as artistically the best of Dickens's novels, "as in it the author adheres most tenaciously to one story."<sup>27</sup> He recognized the critical injunction against loose, episodic structure, though his remarks in *Castle Richmond* indicate that he would have preferred to dispense with this prejudice. Speaking of the Irish famine, he says, "I could write on this subject for a week were it not that Rhadamanthus awaits me, Rhadamanthus the critic; and Rhadamanthus is of all things, impatient of an episode."<sup>28</sup> A few chapters later he breaks in, "but this is an episode. And nowadays no episodes are allowed."<sup>29</sup>

How, then, must the novelist proceed who is called on to fill three volumes? He certainly must not bring forward an inset story, as did Fielding in "The History of the Man of the Hill." His narrative "must be all one," though it "may have many parts."<sup>30</sup> The parts must be nicely adjusted, and there must be no unmotivated or un-

explained action. Notwithstanding Hawthorne's excuses for failing to tie off loose plot ends in *The Marble Faun*, Trollope remarks: "His readers will hardly be so gentle as not to require from him some explanation of the causes which have produced the romantic details to which they have given their attention, and will be inclined to say that it should have been the author's business to give an explanation neither tedious nor unsatisfactory."<sup>31</sup> But Trollope took little pleasure in novels which seemed to have no other virtues than those of closely knit construction.<sup>32</sup> He cared virtually nothing for sudden twists and surprises in plotting, explaining in *Barchester Towers* that the reader, if he chose, might at any point turn to the last chapter and ascertain the fate of the characters. Trollope was confident that in this revelation "the story shall have lost none of its interest."<sup>33</sup>

One of the most difficult problems which the novelist must face is that of maintaining an even and constant flow of narrative. Scenes of high dramatic interest cannot excuse pages of dawdling passivity. Scott, for all his bounding vigor, is often guilty of an unduly relaxed narrative pace.

Scott seems to have understood well not only that Homer might nod sometimes, but that if he could only wake upon occasion he might spend much of his time in sleep. In *Old Mortality* this ease is frequently taken by the novelist. He dwells on the history of the times, and on the circumstances leading to and consequent on the battles that were fought with a weary perseverance that has often led, I think, to much skipping. Now I hold it to be a convincing sign of a good novel that it takes long in the reading,—that the reader finds that with due attention to the story he can hardly skip. *Old Mortality* bears much skipping.<sup>34</sup>

Trollope reinforced his position as a realist by emphasizing the importance to the novelist of establishing the validity of his characters. In this category of purpose Trollope's principles were few, but they were firmly held. Once again he insists on that truth to nature without which there can be no conviction. Thackeray is great because we can believe in his characters.<sup>35</sup> Dickens fails in this respect because he "dispenses with human nature."<sup>36</sup> Again and again Trollope says that a writer must live with his characters.

Charlotte Brontë obviously did;<sup>37</sup> Bulwer obviously did not.<sup>38</sup> Men and women are neither seraphic nor devilish; and if the novelist is to provide a criticism of life that has vitality and meaning, he must forgo dividing his people into heroes and villains. But this above all: if the novelist is to enlist the interest of his readers, he must exhibit characters with whom they can sympathize. "No novel is anything, for purposes either of comedy or tragedy, unless the reader can sympathize with the characters whose names he finds upon the page."<sup>39</sup> For all its virtues, *Old Mortality* fails to achieve greatness because the leading characters have no emotional glow. "The reader finds himself plunged into cold water just at the point at which by some truth of nature he should be warmed into sympathy."<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps the surest way for a Victorian novelist to establish the reader's sympathy was to show his characters as sentimental lovers. Love is the passion which, as Trollope explained, everyone feels, has felt, or expects to feel.<sup>41</sup> "Of all matters concerning life, [love] is the most important."<sup>42</sup> He was himself very cautious in treating love, but he could accuse Jane Austen of cowardice. In a manuscript critique of *Emma* he wrote:

I cannot but notice Miss Austen's timidity in dealing with the most touching scenes which come in her way, and in avoiding the narration of those details which a bolder artist would most eagerly have seized. In the final scene between Emma and her lover,—when the conversation has become almost pathetic,—she breaks away from the spoken dialogue, and simply tells us of her hero's success. This is a cowardice which robs the reader of much of the charm which he has promised himself.<sup>43</sup>

In the exposition and development of his characters Trollope was again traditional, recommending an objective presentation after the manner of Dickens and, to a lesser degree, of Thackeray. George Eliot's subjective approach, especially in her later novels, seemed to him unsatisfactory. "In the dissection of the mind the outward signs seem to have been forgotten."<sup>44</sup> He would no doubt have felt that in Henry James's novels the heat of analysis vaporizes the characters.

In view of the critical disapproval to which his style has been subjected, Trollope had a surprisingly keen interest in the theory of decent writing. He did not, like Frank Norris, despise style; he simply subordinated it to something he thought more important. Speaking of the novelist's duty of pleasing, he says that the style should be correct, but that the greater virtues of intelligibility and harmoniousness come first.<sup>45</sup> Beyond this there is no obligation, for after intelligibility has been achieved, though further embellishments may brighten the pages, they cannot make the meaning more clear. Style is to the writer "not the wares which he has to take to the market, but the vehicle in which they may be carried."<sup>46</sup> The context leaves no doubt that the important thing is to get the wares to the market, no matter how rickety the vehicle. Yet "the primary object of a novelist is to please,"<sup>47</sup> and style is one of the ways by which he can do so.

In order to please his readers a novelist must employ a style that is easy, lucid, and grammatical.<sup>48</sup> An easy style is one "by which the writer has succeeded in conveying to the reader that which the reader is intended to receive with the least possible amount of trouble to him."<sup>49</sup> A lucid style is one "which conveys to the reader most accurately all that the writer wishes to convey on any subject."<sup>50</sup> Thackeray scores high in both categories; his style is the purest and most harmonious of the English novelists.<sup>51</sup> Dickens, in spite of a continued popularity that gives the critic pause, is in point of style jerky, ungrammatical, and defiant of the rules.<sup>52</sup> The young writer should imitate Swift; not Dickens, because Swift is the least mannered of novelists.<sup>53</sup>

Of all faults of style Trollope most despised affectation. Everything Disraeli wrote has "the same flavour of paint and unreality."<sup>54</sup> This is also true of Bulwer. "In all that he did, affectation was his fault."<sup>55</sup> Trollope hated the florid and the pretentious. He most admired simple, lucid prose.

The emphasis on stylistic ease stems from the fact that only through it, Trollope believed, can come harmoniousness, that *sine qua non* of first-rate writing. Again, Thackeray had it. George Eliot, for all her genius, did not. In her later work, Trollope explained to a

correspondent, "not only is the oil flavoured in every page, (which is a great fault)—but with the smell of the oil comes so little of the brilliance which the oil should give. She is always striving for effects which she does not produce."<sup>56</sup> Scott, who could write magnificently when he set himself to it, often failed because he was too facile and too careless. In his haste he frequently stumbled. Harmoniousness, like any other virtue, must be patiently pursued down the tortuous path of devotion and renunciation.

Another category of style which Trollope discusses at some length is manner. He distinguishes among the sublime, the realistic, and the ludicrous, defining the terms and citing examples from the standard novelists. The sublime and the ludicrous are both easier than the realistic because they are not true.<sup>57</sup> In fiction sublimity is rarely attained. Those who have striven for it, such as the authors of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *Pelham*, have not grappled with life but with a fanciful distortion of romantic moods and incidents. Only occasionally, as in specific scenes from Scott, does the sublime in fiction maintain its precarious balance as it circles the periphery of the bathetic.

The sublime manner may often become cold, stilted, formal—and therefore ineffective. The ludicrous or burlesque manner is equally dangerous, for in this technique one man's meat is another man's poison. Whether a reader is taken by "The Heathen Chinees" and *The Bigelow Papers* or by Sam Weller and Mr. Pecksniff is simply a matter of taste. Since "there is no standard by which to judge of the excellence of the ludicrous,"<sup>58</sup> Trollope is content merely to record his delight in Thackeray as a master of the form.

Against these extremes Trollope recommends realism, "the middle course."<sup>59</sup> The realist must above all be natural in his diction. Naturalness, however, is a studied accomplishment. It does not consist in a merely exact transcription of dialogue. The writer

must mount somewhat above the ordinary conversational powers of such persons as are to be represented—lest he disgust. But he must by no means soar into correct phraseology—lest he offend. The realistic—by which we mean that which shall seem to be real—lies between the two, and in reaching it the writer has not only to keep his proper distance on

both sides, but has to maintain varying distances in accordance with the position, mode of life, and education of the speakers.<sup>60</sup>

For exposition and simple narration the same rule obtains. Neither grandeur nor grotesquerie will serve the purposes of truth; both shatter the illusion of reality.

To the foregoing pronouncements on plot, character, and style Trollope adds one more that must be noted: "A novel should give a picture of common life enlivened by humour and sweetened by pathos."<sup>61</sup> This arbitrary and naive formula, widely accepted by the Victorians, suggests the limitations of an art narrowly predicated. It is not very helpful, however, in accounting for the appeal of Trollope's own work, for he made only sparing use of both humor and pathos. Nevertheless, that he should have set down a pattern with which he himself could have been in only partial agreement is the measure of his capitulation to the shibboleths of the popular novel. Of Dickensian humor he had very little; indeed, he did not much enjoy gross foibles and extravagant incident. Thackeray's humor he found superior to Dickens's, but because it is more subtle it has never been so widely admired.<sup>62</sup> The boisterous fun of Charles Lever, though rarely found in Trollope's work, was precisely to his taste as a reader, possibly because of his sentimental fondness for the Irish scene. Similarly, he is chary of indulging his own sentimental and pathetic sensibilities, yet his appreciation of the usefulness of such moods as a novelistic device is strongly marked. "Let an author so tell his tale," he says, "as to touch the reader's heart and draw his tears."<sup>63</sup> In a letter to E. S. Dallas on the subject of Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe* he remarks, "Its pathos is so exquisite that probably we may be justified in saying that in that respect it excels all other novels. And it may perhaps be the case that of all attributes to prose fiction, pathos is the most effective."<sup>64</sup> In all other respects, however, Trollope points out, *Clarissa* is very defective.

These, then, are the elements of fiction as Trollope understood the novel; these are the simple principles by which he tested fiction. Actually, their significance for him extends beyond the novel; and I should like now to offer the evidence of his unpublished dramatic



criticism to show that they represent a single and consistent set of standards by which he measured all literature.

Reference has been made earlier to Trollope's fine collection of sixteenth and seventeenth-century drama. At the time of his death he had annotated and written brief critiques of 257 plays. Certainly no other man of letters had read so widely in the drama, and it is likely that few professional scholars could match his record for thoroughness and persistence. There are not many surprises, however, in his criticism. Indeed, a close student of his novels and of his comments on fiction would probably have little difficulty in predicting his response to familiar plays. The patterns of his criticism are inflexible.

We have already seen Trollope's active concern over the moral implications of literature. In the light of his comments on the function of the novel it is not surprising that much of his dramatic criticism is an attack on Jacobean and Caroline obscenity. Yet he is broad enough to be amused by the homely raciness of the pre-Elizabethans. For him it was a matter of intent; wholesome ribaldry he did not object to, but calculated obscenity drew his wrath. Here he is at one with Lamb, Coleridge, and other romantic critics of the drama. No doubt his appreciation of Shakespeare is to some extent governed by an observation he makes in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize*: that Shakespeare "was definitely beyond his age in discovering the manliness of decency."

The moral issue can be overemphasized, however, and it is well to recall Trollope's announced purpose of searching out the plays' plots and examining the characters. A fair share of his remarks is devoted to an analysis of plot structure. The first virtue of a good plot, one infers, is intelligibility. To be intelligible a plot must be unified. *Richard III* "is intelligible, as the plot is one whole and is not frittered into bits, as in *Henry VI*." If there are two plots, there must be no loose ends. *Monsieur D'Olive* is unintelligible because Chapman "has not taken the trouble so to arrange his ideas as to make plain his plots." The strands of the main and subplots must be closely woven. Marlowe fails in *Edward II*—a strange judgment this—because "he has not understood how to throw many pieces into

one piece so as not to rob the actions of his personages of an appearance of rational consequence." In order, then, to produce a continuous sense of plot, all the incidents must bear directly on the plot. Otherwise, as with Cartwright's *The Ordinary*, all is confusion. In addition, there must be a selection of incident. The gallimaufry of plot in Middleton's *The Mayor of Quinborough* simply will not do. The cause of these incongruities and absurdities, says Trollope, was hurry. Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the Exchange* was marred so, as were a hundred others. Authors took small pains when all that audiences required was that "the incidents should rattle one on another and the language be stirring."

Second, a good plot must be realistic. A certain amount of absurdity has always been endured on the stage in the interests of dramatic strength, but truth to human nature can alone produce that illusion of reality which is art. It is this fidelity to nature, as Trollope explains in his long comment on Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize*, that sets Shakespeare apart from his contemporaries and has preserved this work to our day. Also, there must be a rational explanation for every character and every action. In Fletcher's *The Wild-Goose Chase* "there is no reason why the wild-geese should have been caught, except that the play must end." Therefore, "the scheming of the play is antagonistic to one's realistic sense." The obligations of truth to nature extend as well to acknowledged masterpieces. Many of the scenes of *Volpone* are excellent as satire, but are "not sufficiently lifelike" to be convincing as good comedy.

Third, a good plot must be dramatic. *Every Man Out of His Humour* is not a comedy. It is "a collection of humorous characters who are supposed to entertain us with their wit. . . . It has no plot, and no beginning action or catastrophe." Even the best of Fletcher's comedies, *The Humorous Lieutenant*, is nearly spoiled by the slackening of tempo in the last two acts. There must be continuous movement, then. Chapman's *The Widow's Tears*, for all its faults, can at least be credited with swiftly moving scenes, and Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* is, through the audacity of the quick movement, "the finest of the historical pieces, possessing higher dramatic interest than any of the others." The playwright must

guard, at the same time, against overloading his plot with action. Massinger's *The Maid of Honour* suffers from excess of incident, as does Fletcher's *The Custom of the Country*.

Many of Trollope's strictures on plot he applies equally to character—his second major critical concern. Once again he insists on that truth to nature without which there can be no conviction. The plays of Massinger, he declares, are frequently vulnerable to criticism because of the inconsistency of the characters. The same is particularly true of Beaumont and Fletcher, whose characters, given to sudden and unmotivated changes of heart, owe no allegiance to likelihood. In *The Island Princess* "there is infinite absurdity in the manipulation, certain persons being infamous murderers in one scene, and magnanimous and noble in the next." Such want of discrimination also mars *The Loyal Subject*, in which "the Duke is devilishly bad, or full of honour just as may suit the author's need at the moment." To Trollope such changes, designed to surprise, are the gravest of fictional sins, and he constantly preaches against them in his novels.

But there is another consideration—one which to Trollope is of first importance: there *must* be characters with whom we can sympathize. Where there are no characters who enlist our sympathy, there can be no successful play. Trollope scrutinizes no other element of stagecraft so sharply. George Bartley had written him of *The Noble Jilt*: "There is not one character serious or comic, to challenge the sympathy of the audience; and without that all the good writing in the world will not ensure success upon the stage." Trollope's remarks on the old drama show that he never forgot this dictum. "Marlowe," he says, "never creates a feeling of sympathy. With his Faustus no one cares whether the Devil have him or not." Of Barry's *Ram Alley* he remarks: "Here, as in almost any one of Jonson's plays, there is no room for sympathy. It was but rarely that any one of them, except Shakespeare, touched the heart." *Henry VI* is so lacking in sympathetically drawn characters that Trollope excludes it from the Shakespeare canon.

To the proposition that there must be sympathetically drawn characters is the corollary that poetic justice must be done. Trollope

is baffled and distressed by plays in which virtue is punished and villainy rewarded. Beaumont and Fletcher are particularly unprincipled. In *The Custom of the Country* "we suffer by feeling that all the persons who are happy, fortunate and good at the end, have been abominable in the action"; and in *The Night-Walker*, "every person in the action is false, fraudulent and mischievous, and yet they all turn out good at last."

We have seen that Trollope regarded humor and pathos as essential to the novel. There is ample evidence that he felt much the same about the drama. His appreciation of the pathetic is very strongly marked, and humor is noted wherever it is found. Where there is neither pathos nor humor, we judge, there is a poor play. Beaumont and Fletcher's *Cupid's Revenge* is "a very bad play,—monstrously bad . . . with almost nothing of pathos; certainly with nothing of humor." Beaumont and Fletcher's *Bonduca*, on the other hand, is "an excellent play, with many pathetic scenes, much humour, and a fair amount of poetry."

Trollope's drama criticism, like his criticism of the novel, is of unequal merit. When he is out of sympathy with the general design of a play, he is often carping and captious over details. When, on the contrary, he is most favorably impressed, as with Shakespeare, he is frequently uninspired, descending with untroubled conscience to the banal and the platitudinous. He is sometimes a cursory and inattentive reader, and he is occasionally narrow in his definition of morality on the stage. But he balances his prejudices and his scholarly shortcomings with a judicial admiration for honest achievement. His remarkable praise of Habington's *The Queen of Aragon*—of which he remarked, "I am disposed to say that there is finer poetry in this play than in any other drama in the English language beyond Shakespeare"—rests as much on his delight in its steady craftsmanship as in the excellence of its verse. His merit as a critic of the early drama lies principally in his intellectual honesty and in his freedom from pretensions. He had no axe to grind, no thesis to prove, no coterie to support. Writing therefore only for himself, he recorded a purely personal judgment largely free from doctrinaire assumptions. Content to spell out a candid opinion in simple

terms, he is not moved to disguise commonplaces with an esoteric jargon.

Obviously, Trollope is not a profound critic, rooted historically in Aristotle and Longinus; nor is he a mere subjectivist, a creature of moods, impulses, and vagrant fancies. Rather, he is an informed reader of unusual experience, a writer with a few simple and practical rules which he applies as standards. These were arrived at without much in the way of theory as support; but since they were ratified by experience, they seemed to be valid. As a critic Trollope was a plain and uncomplicated soul, but his honest independence, his untroubled consistency, and his undisguised prejudices make his opinions a touchstone of Victorian literary taste. More importantly, what he said of others provides a valuable commentary on his own principles and practices. As he has somewhere said, "A writer dips into a wide mass of literature and then uses what he finds."

## 5 THE INCUBUS OF PLOT ❀

THE VARIOUS traditions of the novel which came to Trollope as a mid-Victorian he did not wholly accept, yet he certainly cannot be described as an innovator, a creator of new approaches and new techniques. The explanation of this seeming paradox lies in the fact that it pleased him to save the old bottles but to pour in new wine. He was not drawn to the picaresque novel, or the historical novel, or the novel of ideas, or the Newgate novel, or the novel of fashionable life, or any other of the popular forms. He was nevertheless a traditionalist, an architect who sought only to modify current styles in such a way as to leave upon them the impression of his own individuality. One thinks of Trollope as a "typical" nineteenth-century novelist, yet there are several ways in which he was unique. As a traditionalist he may be of interest to the historian, whose function is to determine what is characteristic of an age; but it is only in such respects as he differed from the generality of writers that he will interest the critic.

Before entering upon a discussion of Trollope's plots I should like to say a word about the differences between Victorian and modern criticism of fiction. In his recent and on the whole excellent study *The Victorian Sage* John Holloway speaks disparagingly of critics who attempt to say something vital about the novel in terms of such old-fashioned categories as "plots," "character," and "setting."<sup>1</sup> And in his *Introduction to the English Novel* Arnold Kettle reminds us that all categories are dangerous, that one aspect of a novel is so interwoven with another that "you cannot really separate, say

'character' from 'plot,' 'narrative' from 'background.'"<sup>2</sup> In a sense both of these writers are correct. Criticism in the last half century has evolved a much more precise vocabulary for the discussion of fiction, and serious contemporary novelists, freed from the incubus of a conventional and therefore ultimately inane "story," have been able to fuse purposes and techniques into lyric and dramatic forms which a century ago would not have been recognized as fiction at all.<sup>3</sup> It is obvious that the old nomenclature will not suffice to describe or interpret the novel today. Nevertheless, Trollope *did* use the old critical vocabulary and apparently found it quite adequate to convey his understanding of the tools and mechanisms of fiction. He *did* keep separate the different elements of the novel and saw no danger at all in convenient categorizing.

It is futile to bring to bear on the simplicities of the Victorian novel the theory of fiction as we know it today. In his *Rhythm in the Novel* the late E. K. Brown studied "the expanding symbol," a device frequently used today by a writer concerned with a subtle and elusive idea or emotion that is best rendered objectively. Where the artist must work by suggestion rather than by enumeration, putting his meaning in what Willa Cather called "the unnamed thing," the expanding symbol is useful. But, as Brown saw, to the novelist whose reading of life is clear and convinced it is neither useful nor appropriate: "It would not serve Anthony Trollope's purposes."<sup>4</sup> The Victorian novelists, particularly Dickens, often used the fixed symbol, developed almost entirely by repetition. They had little need, however, for a device to convey what cannot be made wholly explicit. Apart from the moral taboos of the Victorian age, Brown pointed out, Trollope could "render his entire meaning and never resort to anything beyond the conventional elements in the structure of the novel—story, people, place, and comment."<sup>5</sup> It is the function of the present chapter to note Trollope's practice with regard to the conventional element of the plot.

One would probably not care to say that Trollope's plots are without interest, but it is surely true that they constitute the smallest part of his appeal. With an author who took so lightly the narrative element of his novels it could scarcely be otherwise. In his

subordination of plot to character Trollope expressed a preference which went beyond aesthetics. As an admirer of Jane Austen and Thackeray, as opposed to Dickens and Wilkie Collins, he lined up critically with those who take the creation of complex character to be the novelist's chief function. But on the score of his own personality Trollope could not do otherwise. A warm, gregarious nature, hungering for popularity and affection, will find his keenest pleasure in human responses. In proportion as the values he attaches to life become more social, so will he become more interested in what people are than in what they do. If Trollope would not go all the way with Howells, who said that an interest in the "story" is a sure sign of adolescence,<sup>6</sup> he would at least have understood what Howells meant.

It was the human element in fiction, then, that Trollope found engrossing. He tells us that in imagination he had lived with his characters from day to day.<sup>7</sup> He therefore never troubled himself much about plots,<sup>8</sup> finding that it sufficed to place characters he knew in promising situations and to record what they would say and do under these given circumstances. Unlike most writers he did not find it necessary to work out a plot synopsis when he undertook a novel. "When I sit down to write a novel," he declared in the *Autobiography*, "I do not at all know, and I do not very much care, how it is to end" (p. 286). In his comment on *The Eustace Diamonds* he points out that the idea of having Lizzie steal the necklace herself came to him only when he was writing of its loss.

All these things and many more Wilkie Collins could have arranged before with infinite labour, preparing things present so that they should fit in with things to come. I have gone on the very much easier plan of making everything as it comes fit in with what has gone before.<sup>9</sup>

In this regard it is perhaps significant that the advance layouts for a number of Trollope's novels, preserved among his papers at the Bodleian Library and printed in part by Mr. Sadleir, in every other instance consist only of a descriptive list of characters. Once Trollope had firmly established in his mind the nature of the persons whom he was to introduce, he was ready to begin, for the Trollopian



novel is in large measure a collection of characters in search of a plot. The search is not pushed vigorously, for the characters seem quite content with the minor drama of their interrelationships. For such action elaborate sequential planning is not of the first importance. Howells once said that he cared nothing for "prevision" as a critical dictum, that "revision" alone was necessary. Perhaps he was drawn to Trollope because prevision obviously can in no way account for the charm of the Barsestshire novels.

It may be, of course, that in exalting character at the expense of plot Trollope is merely rationalizing his own talent, much as Poe, Henry James, and other theorists have set up their own particular light as the star by which every wandering bark is to be guided. He did admit, however, that plot design is not his forte: "I am not sure that the construction of a perfected plot has been at any special period within my power."<sup>10</sup> It has been noted that *Doctor Thorne*, his only good plot (with the possible exception of *Orley Farm*), was worked out for him by his brother Tom.<sup>11</sup> In discussing this novel Trollope says that plot is "the most insignificant part of a tale."<sup>12</sup> By remarks on plagiarism and on the tendency of great writers to take their stories where they find them, he makes it clear that he considers his obligation to his brother a trifling one. The success of *Doctor Thorne* apparently surprised him, chiefly, one gathers, because he thought it not strong in humor and pathos, and in real characters. On the last score, certainly, most readers will contend that he was quite wrong. "To my thinking," Trollope wrote, "the plot is but the vehicle for all this; and when you have a vehicle without the passengers, a story of mystery in which the agents never spring to life, you have but a wooden show."<sup>13</sup> A writer who describes himself as a "tale-spinner," however, can scarcely neglect entirely the claims of his story; and Trollope admits that "you must provide a vehicle of some sort." It will be necessary, therefore, to examine exactly what Trollope thought was indispensable in the way of plot and to note precisely how he arranged its details.

We have seen that by the middle of the nineteenth century the English novel took many forms. Actually, however, it had changed very little. Differences between *Tom Jones* and *David Copperfield*,

between *Roderick Random* and *Harry Lorrequer*, are differences only in degree. Changing emphases had been suggested and coming events had been foreshadowed by what then seemed to be such oddities as *Wuthering Heights* and *Moby Dick*, but fundamentally the novel's state was one of suspended animation. A trifle wider in scope, perhaps, a trifle richer in its possibilities—such was the pre-Barsetshire novel.

It was still a very unself-conscious form. I have remarked elsewhere the curiosity of a flourishing fiction without a semblance of criticism. Consider the following definition of the novel:

A novel is a large diffused picture, comprehending the characters of life, disposed in different groups, and exhibited in various attitudes, for the purposes of a uniform plan, and general occurrence, to which every individual figure is subservient. But this plan cannot be executed with propriety, probability, or success, without a principal personage to attract the attention, unite the incidents, unwind the clue of the labyrinth, and at last close the scene, by virtue of his own importance.

Not many of the mid-Victorian novelists would have had the slightest objection to writing fiction within the frame of that definition. It is taken, however, from the Prefatory Address to Smollett's *Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753). Obviously, the novel had not come far in a century. Nor was Trollope to be of much importance in hastening it on its way. He did, however, perform one service which should be recorded in his favor. The old novel, following the picaresque tradition, had traced the career of a "principal personage." The structure of most novels was therefore epic rather than dramatic. But Trollope, taking his cue perhaps from Jane Austen, chose to substitute a more coherent form, setting up a situation or a problem that is to be resolved through the interaction of a group of characters. Thus, in *The Warden*, the first typically Trollopian novel, the problem is whether or not an honorable and useful man should be permitted to hold a sinecure. It is a problem of conscience, nothing more. No earlier novelist had dared to be so simple, and certainly none had dispensed so completely with the paraphernalia of romantic plotting. There are no "adventures" of any kind, and

there is almost no love. In "The Art of Fiction" (1884) Henry James was to say, "There are few things more exciting to me than a psychological reason." This was taken as a revolutionary concept as applied to the novel, but Trollope's premise in *The Warden* does not materially differ.

*The Warden* is a one-volume novel of about two hundred pages, a length which seemed perfectly to suit Trollope's talent; but, unfortunately, publishers were calling for three volumes. In order to fulfill these requirements Trollope was forced to do violence to his sense of proportion and to pad out simple narratives with multiple plots, subplots, and episodes. Henry James called such novels "baggy monsters." Virtually all the novelists protested against the triple-deckers,<sup>14</sup> and even the best of them was defeated by the problems posed by its demands. The result was either a mass of material improperly assimilated or the tediousness of a more manageable plot long drawn out. *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend* have each three separate plots, as does *It Is Never Too Late to Mend*. If neither Dickens nor Charles Reade could handle such material convincingly, what chance had Trollope, who admitted that he had no skill in plot construction? The result is usually very bad and in at least one instance tragic. As we have seen, Trollope's finest novel, *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, was nearly ruined by the urgencies of length and by the author's sentimental desire to reintroduce in his final county novel all the favorite characters from the series. Whatever the cause, the effect is most unhappy.

In their confusion and dismay when confronted by so many disparate story lines, readers are joined by the author himself. In *He Knew He Was Right* Trollope let his four separate plots get so out of hand that he felt obligated to interpolate a word of apology.

Since he did not plan but simply extemporized his plots, he frequently tangled and knotted his story lines. It is amusing to watch him struggling in the coils of extraneous and unmanageable narrative, throwing up his hands and admitting in anguished asides to the reader that extrication is virtually impossible. In *Ayala's Angel* he writes: "We are now a little in advance of our special story, which is, or ought to be, devoted to Ayala. But, with the affairs of

so many lovers and their loves, it is almost impossible to make the chronicle run at equal periods."<sup>15</sup> At the somewhat breathless conclusion of the same novel Trollope laughs at the difficulties which he has had to overcome in bringing his various plots together and in reconciling the differences which have separated his couples so that wedding bells may ring simultaneously in many chapels.

Now we have come to our last chapter, and it may be doubted whether any reader,—unless he be some one specially gifted with a genius for statistics,—will have perceived how very many people have been made happy by matrimony. If marriage be the proper ending for a novel,—the only ending, as this writer takes it to be, which is not discordant,—surely no tale was ever so properly ended or with so full a concord, as this one. Infinite trouble has been taken not only in arranging these marriages but in joining like to like,—so that, if not happiness, at any rate sympathetic unhappiness, might be produced (p. 624).

One of the stratagems by which older novelists had pieced out scanty plots was the inset story, a feeble device which flourished as late as *Pickwick Papers* and turns up even in *Catriona*. By Trollope's day, however, the awkwardness of this evasion was generally recognized. Charles Reade, for example, called it "a frightful flaw in art."<sup>16</sup> No doubt Trollope would have agreed, but his secondary plots are not a very great improvement. Sometimes there is a failure to pull the different strands together, as in *Phineas Redux* and *The Three Clerks*; and sometimes one loses sight of a subplot for so long that continuity is lost completely, as in *The Way We Live Now*, where the John Crumb-Ruby story, dropped in chapter lxxi, is not resumed until chapter lxxx.

The inevitable result of this failure to integrate one's material is an episodic style. Critically, Trollope recognized the artist's obligation to reject irrelevant material, as we have seen above,<sup>17</sup> saying:

There should be no episodes in a novel. Every sentence, every word, through all those pages, should tend to the telling of the story. Such episodes distract the attention of the reader, always do so disagreeably. . . . [The writer] may not paint different pictures on the same canvas, which he will do if he allows himself to wander away to matters outside his own story.<sup>18</sup>

Subsidiary plots, Trollope adds, may be fully justified when they tend to the elucidation of the main plot. But he fails in virtually all his long novels at precisely this point, because the episodes he introduces cannot be validated on this basis. Even the shorter novels are vulnerable to the charge of loose structure. In *The Vicar of Bullhampton*, for example, what has the teapot-tempest over Mr. Puddleham's new chapel to do with the story Trollope is telling? Only in the simplest stories, such as *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil*, is Trollope free from padding. It is one of his gravest faults.

Trollope is successful, however, in avoiding one of the most seductive of fictional sins: dialogue for its own sake. Nothing is easier for the novelist, and thus nothing is more tempting, than to set up for his characters a topic for debate on which he happens to be informed and in which he is interested. The question to be asked is: does this discussion contribute to the development of the plot? Trollope insists that if it does not, it must be discarded.<sup>19</sup> Many modern novelists introduce, with various but usually ineffective disguises, political, social, and literary chit-chat; but in spite of his other limitations in technique, Trollope was true to the ideal of objective narrative without editorializing through his characters. That is not to say that he is above commenting on the action in his own person; but it is true that he keeps his pages relatively free from idle chatter.

There is plain evidence, however, of a disconcerting carelessness in Trollope's plotting and of an unwillingness to make necessary revisions. When this is coupled with the kind of chatty author-reader familiarity that made Henry James's thinning hair stand on end, even Trollope's staunchest admirers become unhappy. In the short story "The Two Generals," finding his narrative at an awkward turn, Trollope breaks in: "It should have been mentioned a little way back in this story. . . ." <sup>20</sup> No defense can be urged for such a cavalier attitude toward one's work; it debases the dignity of fiction.

It would not be surprising in any circumstances to discover that the author of forty-seven novels had repeated himself. Few writers have had the originality and the ingenuity to find new situations

to meet the insatiable demands of Victorian plotting. One should not be surprised to find, for example, that *Cousin Henry* and *Sir Harry Hotspur of Humblethwaite* both concern a will, an inheritance, and a conflict in an old man's heart between his concern for a young female relative and his desire that the family name should be carried on; or that "La Mère Bauche" and *The Golden Lion of Granpère* both concern a parent's desire to save a son from marrying disadvantageously a girl brought up in the same house with him. In these stories the only difference lies in the conclusion: two end happily, two unhappily. *Rachel Ray* is nothing more than an elaboration of the short story "The Courtship of Susan Bell."

The novelist who admits a lack of interest in plot will not be above playing variations on old ballad tunes. Trollope, at any rate, was quite happy to repeat his basic plot without apology and without the pretensions of novelty. The story he tells is the convention of boy-meets-girl. There are obstacles—usually social—to the marriage; but, except in a few instances in which melodramatic tragedy intervenes, honesty and devotion conquer snobbishness, and the world is made safe for love.

In a powderpuff romance one's objection to this formula can have little weight, for the music of sentimental love is a tune whistled back from never-never land. It is idle to insist that shopgirl and chambermaid romance should be anything else. But it is pertinent to inquire of a realist whose observation of life has been discriminating and who has been interested in the psychological knots of human involvement how he can reconcile what he knows with what he writes. Such an inquiry is particularly relevant in this instance, for the tragedy of Trollope's career is his capitulation to the stereotype of romantic love. He did not have George Eliot's knowledge of modern science and philosophy, nor did he have Thackeray's impeccable touch as an essayist. He could not, therefore, have achieved distinction in the special fields of serious fiction in which they were superior. Nevertheless, not much of human nature escaped him. He had a sharp eye for little poses and affectations, and for the undercurrent of feeling beneath social mannerisms. In his understanding of mature men and women he yields to none of his

contemporaries. Yet he did not always take advantage of his resources; even his purest vein is often laced with streaks of the baser ores. The love element in novels is nothing more than a concession to public taste. "It is admitted," says Trollope, "that a novel can hardly be made interesting or successful without love."<sup>21</sup> The Lucy Roberts-Lord Lufton story in *Framley Parsonage* he described as a "necessary adjunct, because there must be love in a novel."<sup>22</sup> This is the faulty premise which drove him into plots and subplots in which he had no interest and which he knew to be not only stale and commonplace but intrusive. He concludes *Cousin Henry*: "As any little interest which this tale may possess has come rather from the heroine's material interests than from her love,—as it has not been, so to say, a love story,—the reader need not follow the happy pair absolutely to the altar." Here Trollope very nearly pinpoints his error: the love story is extraneous and should have been dispensed with. It is not part of the story Trollope had to tell, and it is therefore entirely unconvincing. In *Cousin Henry* the assumed need of a lover for Isabel Broderick breaks the back of a plot otherwise soundly constructed. That Trollope was restive under these demands, to which he acceded only in the spirit of throwing a bone to immature readers, is suggested by the plot of *Miss Mackenzie* and by Trollope's discussion of that novel. We are told that in this instance an attempt was made to write a story without love, but that the novelist broke down at last and found a lover for his homely spinster.<sup>23</sup> Trollope did not dare to violate this most unfortunate of all Victorian traditions.

In the *Autobiography* Trollope discusses at some length his treatment of love. For its dominant position in his novels he can offer only the excuse that the passion is universal and thus of continuing interest to all. But, chiefly, he salves his conscience with the thought that he has taken advantage of his opportunity to teach his young readers a wholesome lesson. Girls must learn to love somehow, and the reading of novels is conducive to "freedom of thought." Besides, "while human nature talks of love so forcibly it can hardly serve our turn to be silent."<sup>24</sup> In thus advancing the moral argument, however, Trollope is guilty of no more than rationalizing. Certainly

there is nothing hypocritical in his insistence on the force which the novel may exert for good or evil. He is entirely consistent, early and late, on this point. Other novelists, as well, were saying the same thing. George Eliot, for example, held that the

man or woman who publishes writings inevitably assumes the office of teacher or influencer of the public mind. Let him protest as he will that he only seeks to amuse, and has no pretension to do more than while away an hour of leisure or weariness,—“the idle singer of an empty day,”—he can no more escape influencing the moral taste, and with it the action of the intelligence than a setter of fashions in furniture and dress can fill the shops with his designs and leave the garniture of persons and houses unaffected by his industry.<sup>25</sup>

What one objects to is not that Trollope was almost painfully aware of the ethical implications of his stories, but that he chose to frame his moral philosophy in a pallid and pedestrian plot.

No one has ever confused Trollope with Byron. He is not a romantic figure, and we know that idyllic love did not affect him profoundly. But the stories he tells so frequently concern immature, adolescent romance that the reader is moved to charge him with insincerity. This is the price which Trollope must pay for his deference to the taste of the lending library. Actually, he knew as well as any man who has looked about him that schoolgirl romance is inevitably a phenomenon of inexperience; yet in his novels he rarely goes beyond the curtain fall of happiness-ever-after. He is therefore vulnerable to the charge of superficiality; but he knew better. True love is a marriage of true minds. He did not need the poet to tell him this.

In *The Eustace Diamonds* Frank Greystock's love for Lucy Morris prompts a comment on the nature of love:

There are many men, and some women, who pass their lives without knowing what it is to be or to have been in love. They not improbably marry,—the men do, at least,—and make good average husbands. Their wives are useful to them, and they learn to feel that a woman, being a wife, is entitled to all the respect, protection, and honour which a man can give, or procure for her. Such men, no doubt, often live honest lives,



are good Christians, and depart hence with hopes as justifiable as though they had loved as well as Romeo. But yet, as men, they have lacked a something, the want of which has made them small and poor and dry. It has never been felt by such a one that there would be triumph in giving away everything belonging to him for one little whispered, yielding word, in which there should be acknowledgement that he had succeeded in making himself master of a human heart. And there are other men,—very many men,—who have felt this love, and have resisted it, feeling it to be unfit that Love should be Lord of all.<sup>26</sup>

And in *The Claverings* Trollope makes it plain enough that the essence of love is to be found in respect and devotion rather than in a sentimental sexual attachment.

A man, though he may love many, should be devoted only to one. The man's feelings to the woman whom he is to marry should be this:—that not from love only, but from chivalry, from manhood, and from duty, he will be prepared always, and at all hazards, to defend her from every misadventure, to struggle ever that she may be happy, to see that no wind blows upon her with needless severity, that no ravening wolf of a misery shall come near her, that her path be swept clean for her,—as clean as may be,—and that the rooftree be made firm upon a rock. There is much of this which is quite independent of love,—much of it that may be done without love. This is devotion, and it is this which a man owes to the woman who has once promised to be his wife and has not forfeited her right.<sup>27</sup>

Meaningful love shows itself *after* marriage rather than before. In the last chapter of *Middlemarch* George Eliot implicitly apologizes for the weakness of her age (a weakness which she was conscious of sharing) in making the transitory passion of young love the only subjection of fiction. Thackeray, too, as well he might, knew that the poignant moments of life are not restricted to the few months of courtship. Mrs. Mackenzie turns out to be a selfish old harriidan, but it is impossible to deny the wisdom of one of her remarks to Pendennis:

You gentlemen who write books, Mr. Pendennis, and stop at the third volume, know very well that the real story often begins afterwards. My third volume ended when I was sixteen, and was married to my poor

husband. Do you think all our adventures ended then, and that we lived happily ever after? <sup>28</sup>

It is clear, I think, that the Victorians did not really accept the view of love which they advanced in their novels. Many of them, at least, would have had no difficulty in accepting the position of such different modern writers as H. L. Mencken, who said that "the destiny and soul of man are not moulded by petty jousts of sex, as the prophets of romantic love would have us believe," <sup>29</sup> and André Gide, who expressed a regret that French fiction deals so much with love as the end of all man's efforts, and who turned with relief to such novels as *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moby Dick*, which he called "virile books." <sup>30</sup>

The love story is not the only element of the Victorian novel that is introduced primarily for the common reader. The success story, based on the triumph of humble merit over vulgar prerogative, is also part of the formula. Under the impulses of his social consciousness Trollope develops the habit of rewarding his penniless heroines with the hand of a lord. The interpretation of life on which this bit of sentimentality is based has little connection with reality, as his most unsophisticated readers of course knew. Cinderella legends, however, have a strong hold on the human heart, particularly in a society in which the stratification into classes is clearly marked and carefully preserved. Moralists have always been quick to point out that honesty is a wise policy and that integrity and good works will not long go unappreciated. This is a species of pathetic fallacy dearly beloved of the Victorian novelists. Trollope is at pains to see that his little heroines, whose beauty is of heart and soul rather than of face and figure, are recompensed for the vicissitudes which they have patiently endured by a socially and financially desirable marriage. Lucy Morris, Grace Crawley, and Lucy Robarts, to name a few, break through prejudices and overwhelm family pride as they win husbands far above their own station. The obverse of the medal repeats the design: a deserving young man without money is accepted in marriage by a woman of wealth. Phineas Finn, an impecunious M.P., is rewarded for his

amiability by the hand of Mme. Max Goesler. Daniel Thwaite, the son of a tailor, is rewarded for his loyalty to Lady Anna by her hand in marriage when she inherits Lord Lovel's estate. When Lady Wood questioned the knocking down of social barriers in this last instance Trollope replied, "Of course the girl has to marry the tailor. It is very dreadful, but there was no other way."<sup>31</sup> The English version of the Horatio Alger tradition had to provide for the crossing of social as well as economic lines. Hence the banalities of long-lost children, newly discovered wills, and primogeniture. The middle class, whose reading habits always determine best sellers, fancied these illusory tales—the blocks with which they built their insubstantial castles. Thackeray, for one, scored the public appetite for "success-story fiction" and the novelists' ready capitulation to public demand:

Why should we keep all our admiration for those who win in this world, as we do, sycophants that we are? When we write a novel, our great, stupid imaginations can go no further than to marry the hero to a fortune at the end, and to find out that he is a lord by right. O blundering, lick-spittle morality!<sup>32</sup>

John Galsworthy somewhere says, "A good novel, like a successful author is well rounded in the middle, and skimpy at both ends." In that sense few of Trollope's novels are good, for most of them are heavy at the beginning and fuller than need be at the end. Trollope's indifference to plot, then, extends also to structure. Most of his contemporaries, of course, sketching perhaps from the model of Scott, began their stories very awkwardly. Scott was given to long genealogical chapters in which by way of introduction he traced the antecedents of characters who had not yet appeared in the narrative. It is sometimes said that our forefathers were not so harried as we and that they had more time to savor the delights of a leisurely story. But that one could be so completely relaxed as to feel no impatience over the glacial openings of novels so otherwise good as *Framley Parsonage*, *Orley Farm*, and *The American Senator* strikes the modern reader as quite impossible. Even in the

Victorian period time must have had some meaning. That this fact was not lost on Trollope, that it was indeed quite actively in his mind, is the inference from an editorial remark in the first chapter of *The Vicar of Bullhampton*: "Now there must be one word of Mary Lowther, and then the story shall be commenced"; and from the apology in *The Eustace Diamonds*: ". . . the poor narrator has been driven to expend his first four chapters in the mere task of introducing the characters. He regrets the length of these introductions and will now begin at once the action of his story" (p. 30). It is not, however, simply a matter of time and of movement. There is also the graver concern of intelligibility. One needs a chart to follow the opening pages of *The American Senator*. The mind of the average reader cannot sort and assimilate as quickly as Trollope thought the facts of so many relationships. Henry James protested against the Victorian habit of forcing upon readers at the outset of a novel what he called "a seated mass of information." He contended that the artist will tuck in and fold in essential background material as it becomes relevant to developing situations. The novelist must learn from the playwright the dramatic method of exposition.

Trollope was fully aware of the dangers inherent in protracted and unrelieved exposition. He concludes the second chapter of *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* with the admission, "I have fatigued the reader with the long history of past affairs"; and he begins the second chapter of *Doctor Thorne* similarly:

I quite feel that an apology is due for beginning a novel with two long dull chapters full of description. I am perfectly aware of the danger of such a course. In so doing I sin against the golden rule which requires us all to put our best foot foremost, the wisdom of which is fully recognized by novelists, myself among the number. . . . Whether or not I can atone for these faults by straightforward, simple, plain story telling—that, indeed, is very doubtful.

In *The Three Clerks* Charley Tudor discusses his story "Crinoline and Macassar" with Harry Norman. Charley says of the ordinary reader, "If you begin with a long history of who's who and all that.

why he won't read three pages." <sup>33</sup> Trollope seems to be aware that Charley is right, for the first chapter of *The Three Clerks* moves very swiftly and is, in fact, one of Trollope's best. Another novel which opens well is *Rachel Ray*, where the narrative is not clogged and cluttered at the outset with exposition. But in *The Duke's Children*, at the end of his career, he was still debating the alternatives. He breaks his narrative to open chapter ix with a full statement of the problem and of his usual method of meeting it:

Perhaps the method of rushing as once "in medias res" is, of all the ways of beginning a story, or a separate branch of a story, the least objectionable. The reader is made to think that the gold lies so near the surface that he will be required to take very little trouble in digging for it. And the writer is enabled,—at any rate for a time, and till his neck has become, as it were, warm to the collar,—to throw off from him the difficulties and dangers, the tedium and prolixity, of description. This rushing "in medias res" has doubtless the charm of ease. "Certainly, when I threw her from the garret window to the stony pavement below, I did not anticipate that she would fall so far without injury to life or limb." When a story has been begun after this fashion, without any prelude, without description of the garret or of the pavement, or of the lady thrown, or of the speaker, a great amount of trouble seems to have been saved. The mind of the reader fills up the blanks,—if erroneously, still satisfactorily. He knows, at least, that the heroine has encountered a terrible danger, and has escaped from it with almost incredible good fortune; that the demon of the piece is a bold demon, not ashamed to speak of his own iniquity, and that the heroine and the demon are so far united that they have been in a garret together. But there is the drawback on the system,—that it is almost impossible to avoid the necessity of doing, sooner or later, that which would naturally be done at first. It answers, perhaps, for half-a-dozen chapters;—and to carry the reader pleasantly for half-a-dozen chapters is a great matter!—but after that a certain nebulous darkness gradually seems to envelop the characters and the incidents. "Is all this going on in the country, or is it in town,—or perhaps in the Colonies? How old was she? Was she tall? Is she fair? Is she heroine-like in her form and gait? And, after all, how high was the garret window?" I have always found that the details would insist on being told at last, and that by rushing "in medias res" I was simply presenting the cart

before the horse. But as readers like the cart the best, I will do it once again,—trying it only for a branch of my story,—and will endeavour to let as little as possible of the horse be seen afterwards.<sup>34</sup>

One sometimes hears from readers who do not particularly care for Trollope that the pace of his novels is too slow even after he gets them underway. At this point he can no doubt be defended, since the illustration of character does not demand and indeed cannot support a rapid sequence of events. There are moments, however, when even Trollope seems to recognize that he has not handled his scene with dispatch. In *Doctor Thorne*, feeling that he has been tedious in describing some mild lovemaking, Trollope says, "Were I possessed of a quick spasmodic style of narrative, I should have been able to include it all . . . in five words and a half-a-dozen dashes and inverted commas. . . . The things should have been so told" (p. 91). The remark is, of course, facetiously made, yet there is in it as much truth as exaggeration.

Many readers have also felt that Trollope is too slow in bringing his stories to a long-foreseen conclusion. The argument is that where there is uncertainty and suspense a writer can afford to be deliberate; in fact, in such instances deliberateness can be part of a calculated technique. But where the writer has rejected the opportunities and advantages of surprise, he must provide by way of compensation a denouement that is at least brief and artful. That Trollope does not always do so must be acknowledged. We know very early in *The Prime Minister*, for example, that Emily Wharton Lopez must marry Arthur Fletcher at last. It is not only our certainty that fictional justice will be observed: we have the analogue of *Can You Forgive Her?*, where Alice Vavasor's happiness with John Grey has been long delayed under somewhat similar circumstances; and we have the analogue of *The Belton Estate*, where Clara Amedroz takes an unconscionable time to reject Captain Aylmer and accept Will Belton. There is no point in multiplying examples, which are everywhere. Stevenson makes an interesting comment on this point in a letter to his parents:

Do you know who is my favorite author just now: How are the mighty fallen! Anthony Trollope. I batten on him; he is so nearly wearying, and

yet he never does; or rather he never does, until he gets near the end, when he begins to wean you from him, so that you're as pleased to be done with him as you thought you would be sorry.<sup>35</sup>

Trollope's disregard for plot suspense is a determining characteristic of his novels. This is the effect of which the cause is perhaps his dissatisfaction with the formula of the sensation novel. In illustrating his freedom from the limitations of this technique, at any rate, he is frequently at pains to dissipate whatever interest might accrue to uncertainties of plot. Chapter xlv of *The Claverings*, "Showing What Happened off Heligoland," is flat and ineffectual because the author has so fully prepared us for the action that the surprise which could alone support such a chapter does not develop. In *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, where there is an intriguing mystery at the very heart of the plot, Trollope loses much of the effect which he might have had by suggesting Mrs. Arabin's connection with Josiah Crawley's cheque before the revelation is made. He was so determined to dissociate the success of his novels from any interest in mere plot that he never tired of illustrating and explaining the realistic bias from which he wrote. Thus, he says in *The Bertrams*: "I abhor a mystery . . . I would fain, were it possible, have my tale run through from its little prologue to the customary marriage in its last chapter, with all the smoothness incidental to ordinary life. I have no ambition to surprise my reader."<sup>36</sup> There is also a familiar passage, referred to earlier, at the end of chapter x of *Barchester Towers* in which the novelist invites the reader to turn to the final pages. Trollope is confident that a knowledge of the conclusion will in no wise lessen whatever interest the story has. The longest statement, however, occurs in chapter iii of *Dr. Wortle's School*, where Trollope explains his mystery at once and justifies doing so in the light of his purposes as a novelist.

And now, O kind-hearted reader, I feel myself constrained, in the telling of this little story, to depart altogether from those principles of story telling to which you probably have become accustomed, and to put the horse of my romance before the cart. There is a mystery respecting Mr. and Mrs. Peacocke which, according to all laws recognised in such mat-

ters, ought not to be elucidated till, let us say, the last chapter but two, so that your interest should be maintained almost to the end,—so near the end that there should be left only space for those little arrangements which are necessary for the well-being, or perhaps for the evil-being, of our personages. It is my purpose to disclose the mystery at once, and to ask you to look for your interest,—should you choose to go on with my chronicle,—simply in the conduct of my persons, during this disclosure, to others. You are to know it all before the Doctor or the Bishop,—before Mrs. Wortle or the Hon. Mrs. Stantiloup, or Lady De Lawle. You are to know it all before the Peacockes become aware that it must necessarily be disclosed to any one. It may be that when I shall have once told the mystery there will no longer be any room for interest in the tale to you. That there are many such readers of novels I know. I doubt whether the greater number be not such. I am far from saying that the kind of interest of which I am speaking,—and of which I intend to deprive myself,—is not the most natural and the most efficacious. What would the “Black Dwarf” be if everyone knew from the beginning that he was a rich man and a baronet?—or “The Pirate,” if all the truth about Norma of the Fitful-head had been told in the first chapter? Therefore, put the book down, if the revelation of some future secret be necessary for your enjoyment.<sup>37</sup>

One further evidence of laxity in construction is Trollope’s penchant for resolving his plots through accidental circumstances. The sensation novelist, who is not concerned with maintaining all the levels of reality, does not hesitate to introduce chance and fortuity. Wilkie Collins was devoted to “those extraordinary accidents and events which happen to few men.”<sup>38</sup> The essence of his technique is to superimpose the uncommon on the common. But the realist must stay within the bounds of the probable and the reasonable. For him the denouement must develop naturally from character, not arbitrarily from a violent and unexpected wrenching of the plot. When the realist permits the solution of his novel to turn on an accident, we may be pretty certain that he is shirking the labor that a more ordered conclusion would entail. When in *The Claverings* Sir Hugh Clavering and his brother are drowned in a storm off the coast of Norway and Harry becomes unexpectedly heir to a large estate, the reader feels cheated. The moral problem which has been posed is quite evaded by this facile and unconvincing



solution. From a third-rate romantic novelist writing melodrama for Mr. Mudie nothing more than this kind of claptrap is expected, but Trollope is too sincere an artist to surrender so abjectly to bathos. Similarly, when Phineas Finn returns to Ireland, at loose ends politically and matrimonially, he receives a totally unexpected legacy of £3,000 from an aunt who obligingly dies at this strategic moment. There are other examples, but one need not labor the point: careless plotting substantially reduces the effectiveness of Trollope's novels.

For most readers today and for all students of the technique of fiction the strength of Trollope's novels is further reduced by a mannerism that might well be considered at this time. The intrusion of the personality of the writer into a novel is a violation of that objectivity which theorists believe the storyteller must maintain. To the extent that an authorial commentary represents an interference in the free flow of the narrative it may be discussed as in some measure a quality of plotting. It is certainly one of the most characteristic and one of the most annoying features of nineteenth-century storytelling.

Henry James was a shrewd critic of Trollope, as he was of virtually all novelists. He understood Trollope's power, and he acknowledged it; but he laid a heavy hand on Trollope's weaknesses. Nothing that Trollope did seemed to James more reprehensible than his almost perverse habit of shattering the illusion of reality which must lie at the very heart of every novel's appeal: "He took a suicidal satisfaction in reminding the reader that the story he was telling was only, after all, a make-believe."<sup>39</sup> Thackeray, from whom Trollope learned almost as many faults as virtues, had presented himself as the puppet-master of *Vanity Fair*. Trollope not only goes further in showing his readers how the strings may be pulled, he asks them which string he ought to pull. The play loses its power when it is seen from backstage, or when the author keeps bobbing up to lecture the audience. What defense can be made for such authorial intrusions as the following:

Now, having read Sophie's thoughts so far, we will leave her to walk up the remainder of the arcade by herself.<sup>40</sup>

If the reader does not understand so much from [Lady Carbury's] letters to the three editors they have been written in vain. She has been made to say that her object in work. . . . [etc.]<sup>41</sup>

Our tale and toils have now drawn nigh to an end; our loves and our sorrows are over; and we are soon to part company with the three clerks and their three wives. Their three wives? Why, yes. It need hardly be told in so many words to an habitual novel-reader that Charley did get his bride at last.<sup>42</sup>

Of Augustus we have said enough; but as I intend that Madeline Stanbury shall, to many of my readers, be the most interesting personage in this story, I must pause to say something of her.<sup>43</sup>

It has been suggested that the modern English writers of fiction should among them keep a barrister, in order that they may be set right on such legal points as will arise in their little narratives, and thus avoid that exposure of their own ignorance of the laws, which now, alas! they too often make. The idea is worthy of consideration, and I can only say, that if such an arrangement can be made, and if a counsellor adequately skillful can be found to accept the office, I shall be happy to subscribe my quota; it would be but a modest tribute toward the cost.

But as the suggestion has not yet been carried out, and as there is at present no learned gentleman whose duty would induce him to set me right, I can only plead for mercy if I be wrong in allotting all Sir Roger's vast possessions in perpetuity to Miss Thorne, alleging also, in excuse, that the course of my narrative absolutely demands that she shall be ultimately recognised as Sir Roger's undoubted heiress.<sup>44</sup>

There are literally scores of such passages. In their cumulative effect they tend to persuade one that the novelist does not take his work seriously and that the reader is a dupe. Since no one enjoys being put in such a position, there develops a good deal of resentment toward the author. That a judgment against his sincerity may be erroneous, as it certainly is with Trollope, who tells us that he lived with his characters by day and by night, is simply a measure of the damage which the chatty writer inflicts upon himself when he takes the reader behind the scenes and explains the mechanics of the pulleys and levers.

Even more galling to some readers than the authorial stage

whisper is the apostrophe. Although this pernicious habit has venerable antecedents, there is little doubt that Trollope's fondness for it was inherited from Thackeray. Originally, perhaps, there was a pale ghost of humor in the mock-sententious manner, but very little familiarity with the device will teach the most patient reader that it will not support repetition. Even the best of exaggerated effects will quickly become tedious, and the apostrophe could never have been considered a stroke of genius. Who would care to contend that frequently repeated passages such as the following, chosen from one novel, *The Three Clerks*, do not become at last infinitely wearisome:

Ah! Mrs. Woodward, my friend, my friend, thou who wouldst have fed thy young ones, like the pelican, with blood from thine own breast, had such feeding been of avail; thou who art the kindest of mothers; has it been well for thee to subject to such perils this poor weak young dove of thine (p. 56)?

Oh! ye ruthless swains, from whose unhallowed lips fall words full of poisoned honey, do ye never think of the bitter agony of many months, of the dull misery of many years, of the cold monotony of an uncheered life, which follow so often as the consequence of your short hour of pastime (p. 158)?

Poor Katie!—dear, darling, bonny Katie!—sweet, sweetest, dearest child! why, oh why, has that mother of thine, that tender-hearted loving mother, put thee unguarded in the way of such peril as this? Has she not sworn to herself that over thee at least she would watch as a hen does over her young, so that no unfortunate love should quench thy young spirit, or blanch thy cheek's bloom? Has she not trembled at the thought of what would have befallen thee, had thy fate been such as Linda's? Has she not often,—oh, how often!—on her knees thanked the Almighty God that Linda's spirit was not as thine; that this evil had happened to the lamb whose temper had been fitted by Him to endure it? And yet—here thou art—all unguarded, all unaided, left by thyself to drink of the cup of sweet poison, and none near to warn thee that the draught is deadly (p. 305).

O reader! should it chance that thou art a clergyman, imagine what it would be to thee, wert thou asked what is the exact use of the Church of

England; and that, too, by some stubborn catechist whom thou wert bound to answer; or, if a lady, happy in a husband and family, say, what would be thy feelings if demanded to define the exact use of matrimony? Use! Is it not all in all to thee (p. 541)?

It should be noted in Trollope's defense, however, that authorial intrusions become less frequent as his art matures. *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers* are full of editorializing. But in his sketch of Thackeray, written in 1879, he is quite severe on his old master for this very fault.

I am inclined to think that his most besetting sin in style—the little earmark by which he is most conspicuous—is a certain affected familiarity. He indulges too frequently in little confidences with individual readers, in which pretended allusions to himself are frequent. "What would you do? What would you say now, if you were in such a position?" he asks . . . such addresses and conversations . . . cause an absence of that dignity to which even a novel may aspire (pp. 197–198).

Nevertheless, Trollope did not entirely abandon the practice, even in his last novels, and the attack on Thackeray must be regarded as one of the classic examples of the pot calling the kettle black.

It is clear, then, that the appeal which Trollope's novels continue to make arises from his mastery of other elements of the art of fiction than plot. Never much concerned about the story as narrative, he allowed himself to fall into errors of structure and proportion. Through carelessness or indifference he was guilty of unfortunate extravagances of manner. Attention to inferior writers, and to the less successful work of skilled writers, often led him astray. This is only to say again, as Trollope readily acknowledged, that plot was not his forte.

## 6 CHARACTER OR THE REAL THING ❧

IN *The Great Tradition* F. R. Leavis, finding that there are only two first-rate nineteenth-century English novelists, Jane Austen and George Eliot, is very hard on all the others, and still harder on those readers and critics who find much to admire in the work of Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, Meredith, and Hardy. There are two principal charges against the latter novelists: they do not trouble themselves about form and method, and they do not create profoundly serious works of art.<sup>1</sup>

It is undeniably true that the Victorian novelists did not have a precise theory of fiction. Proportion meant as little to them as did point of view. Unity was not so important as movement. Of course, the vocabulary of contemporary criticism—pattern, design, focus, distance, scale, pace, etc.—did not even exist, nor except in the most nebulous way did the concepts out of which the terms grew. The novelists had no single formula; in fact, insofar as they committed themselves on matters of technique, they appear to have been tolerant of any method which would produce a sound and readable work. Certainly George Eliot is broader than Dr. Leavis and will admit into the house of fiction whatever is alive.

What is the best way of telling a story? Since the standard must be the interest of the audience, there must be several or many good ways rather than one best. For we get interested in the stories life presents to us through divers orders and modes of presentation. . . . The only stories life presents to us in an orderly way are those of our autobiography, or the career of our companions from our childhood upwards, or perhaps

of our own children. . . . Why should a story not be told in the most irregular fashion that an author's idiosyncrasy may prompt, provided that he gives us what we can enjoy? The objections to Sterne's way of telling "Tristram Shandy" lie more solidly in the quality of the interrupting matter than in the fact of interruption.<sup>2</sup>

On the second point, it can only be said that there seems to be no way of precisely determining when a novel becomes "serious." Dr. Leavis finds that in the Dickens canon only one work, *Hard Times*, will qualify in this regard. Professor Edgar Johnson, however, has recently written at length of *Bleak House* as "an indictment . . . of the whole dark muddle of organized society. . . . What Dickens has done here, in fact, has been to create the novel of the social group, used as an instrument of sound criticism."<sup>3</sup> His analysis does not even recognize the possibility of anything but the gravest and most earnest approach to this material. I am not sure but that on a somewhat different level a strong case could be made for the complete seriousness of *Our Mutual Friend* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. I find, at any rate, no slightest tendency toward Pickwickian high-jinks in these novels.

Dr. Leavis's condemnation of Thackeray on this same score is without reservation:

. . . he has (apart from some social history) nothing to offer the reader whose demand goes beyond the 'creation of characters.' His attitudes and the essential substance of interest, are so limited that (though, of course, he provides incident and plot) for the reader it is merely a matter of going on and on; nothing has been done by the close to justify the space taken—except, of course, that time has been killed. . . .<sup>4</sup>

But Professor Johnson in the article quoted above sees in *Vanity Fair* an anticipation of the social concept underlying *Bleak House*. *Vanity Fair*, he contends, is "a moral commentary upon human nature" written "in the spirit of *Everyman* and *Pilgrim's Progress*."<sup>5</sup> Surely these two latter are profoundly serious books, and I therefore do not see how the two quoted judgments can be reconciled. At the risk of being classified by Dr. Leavis among those whose responses to the traditional Victorian novel indicate something

less than an "adult mind," one can only say that he finds more in Thackeray than the critic will allow.

Dr. Leavis also complains of the obsolete critical approach which defines fictional artistry in terms of the creation of "life" and the creation of "character." He is quite right in denying greatness to novels whose chief virtues are a show of animal spirits and a certain breathlessness of action. No doubt the older critics were misguided in equating "life" with a splash of local color and a knot of forthright characters, but the hard fact is that the best of such novels have survived, and it will not suffice to dismiss those who enjoy them as uncritical. Meanwhile, Dr. Leavis cannot understand why Disraeli has perished: "his interests . . . the interests of a supremely intelligent politician who has a sociologist's understanding of civilization and its movement in his time—are so mature."<sup>6</sup> Disraeli's buried prose, unlike Henry James's, will never kick off its tombstone, and the reason is surely to be found in Dr. Leavis's statement. Clever politicians who are also understanding sociologists are among the least likely candidates for the laurels of fiction. The truth is that as a novelist Disraeli was dull—unmitigatedly, unconscionably dull. As a writer of fiction he does not exist, precisely because he never created that "life" with which, Dr. Leavis complains, the traditional critics have been too concerned.

The traditional critics have also been concerned with the creation of character. Such an approach, with all its limitations of perspective, is natural and almost inevitable. The Victorian novel was not primarily concerned with ideas. This is by no means to say that there were no ideas, that there was only the pap of adolescent romance. The social and humanitarian novel has rarely been so powerful as in Victorian England. Nor was the novel of the period deeply concerned with psychology and the analysis of motive. Again, that is not to say that many characters are not conceived and developed with great care. But it is true that in general the novelists thought to engage interest by emphasis on lively plot and extraordinary, rather than subtle, characters. The sensation novelists, of course, illustrate this preference most fully, but even what Trollope thought of as realism is separated from sensationalism by degree

rather than by kind. Mrs. Proudie, for example, is Dickensian, and certain scenes from *Orley Farm*, as Trollope recognized,<sup>7</sup> are sensational. Plot and character, then, because for the practitioners they were virtually the only elements of the novel, *must* be discussed in any assessment of Victorian fiction. These are the lights by which the novelists saw their material. Trollope's criticism, with its recurring emphasis on plot and character, humor and pathos, and moral teaching, strikes the critic today as naive. Yet few of his contemporaries saw the novel as a form of any complexity. We may go beyond the Victorian theory of fiction as we attempt to determine the permanent value of a given novel, but in all fairness we must begin with the concepts and purposes which then prevailed. Trollope's sole aim was to create what Dr. Leavis tells us we are wrong in searching for and rejoicing in: "moving, living, human creatures."<sup>8</sup>

Dr. Leavis's concept of criticism has been seconded (or anticipated) by his wife Queenie D. Leavis and, among others, by I. A. Richards and Denys Thompson. Mrs. Leavis in *Fiction and the Reading Public* deprecates the tendency of general readers to respond to "characters," to equate "broad outlines" with "real" people, and to express a "resentful bewilderment" at the work of novelists who do not provide "characters."<sup>9</sup> The implication of her argument supports the modern artistic novel of ideas against the Victorian novel of "characters." For Mrs. Leavis "the essential technique in an art that works by using words is the way in which the words are used."<sup>10</sup> The discussion of such abstractions as plot, character, and setting, she asserts, is pointless and profitless. Dr. Richards seeks to test the quality of an author's mind and sensibility by subjecting selected passages to a rigorous analysis in terms of "sense, feeling, tone, and intention." Mr. Thompson, taking his cue from Richards, deals severely with critics who are "content to appraise the excellence of character-drawing or plot-making, an employment which does not further the business of criticism (to evaluate the quality of mind to the influence of which we are submitting ourselves). . . ." <sup>11</sup> That is, criticism studies the author, not his characters. But are not a novelist's characters a reflection of his



consciousness? Is not all art a function of one's autobiography? Is not what the novelist does with his characters an illustration of the quality of his mind?

The school of criticism represented by the Leavises (the *Scrutiny* critics) has performed a very valuable service for modern letters. Like the New Critics they have taught us to study the work of art closely and for itself. They have set up standards against loose relativism and fuzzy impressionism. And they have driven admirers of the Victorian novel to re-examine the bases of their prejudices. To this extent their work has been most salutary and most necessary. But they tend to be aggressively dogmatic, pressing their conviction beyond the limits of its usefulness, refusing to concede any relevance to the "academic" approach (which I take to be an attempt to understand, within the context of a given age, what certain concepts meant to the writers who employed them). Their refusal to meet the nineteenth-century novelists on their own terms, or to permit others to do so, is a species of critical myopia that distorts the very real values of their approach. "Character" was for Trollope the essence of the novelist's art, the real thing, and any profitable (and equitable) discussion of his work must, I believe, be based on a recognition of this fact.

Van Wyck Brooks is obviously right in attributing Trollope's appeal to his characters: "'Sophisticated' Americans of a later time [after Howells and James] did not care to read about their forebears. They were apt to prefer Anthony Trollope, not because he was infinitely better than Howells but because they were fascinated by Trollope's people."<sup>12</sup> Few readers trouble themselves unduly with what happens in these novels. The author himself, as we have seen, took little interest in the mere sequence of events and little pride in his minor triumphs of plotting. He chose to work with either a sharply truncated narrative mass, such as *The Warden*, in which case attention is focused on character by virtue of the absence of plot; or with an uncontrolled narrative mass, such as *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, where the absurdity of the sub-plots sets off the dignity of the main action. In each of these novels what is memorable is a character—a man of conscience, a man of great

personal integrity and of utter selflessness, who is tested by bitter circumstance and is found to be strong. Some variation of this pattern is to be observed in all the greater novels. In the lesser novels no character emerges of sufficient power to compensate for shoddy and conventional plotting. The heart of a good Trollope novel is, therefore, a firmly grasped character. Where Trollope's imagination has only loosely seized his core character, there is utter failure. Other novelists may compensate for such a fault by poetic harmonies, dramatic tensions, structural integrations, or other narrative gifts; but Trollope staked all on a clear realization of character.

One might expect that such a concentration on character would result in a variety of types. But Trollope's imagination, though often deep, was not wide. There are only a few basic types, and on these, endless variations are played. This is even more true of the sensation novelist, whose characters follow the patterns of traditional melodrama. But Trollope was careful to differentiate his practices from those of such writers as Reade and Collins, who were given to more garish characterizations. Trollope's realism called for a keener understanding and a more artful blending of human emotions than Reade and Collins found necessary. His repeated discussions of the place of the hero in fiction, for example, are given a slyly humorous twist, but they point up and define his realism importantly.

By rejecting the familiar concept of the hero, surely the most ossified of all character types, Trollope declared his independence from the most vigorous cliché of the popular novel.

Perhaps no terms have been so injurious to the profession of the novelist as these two words, hero and heroine. In spite of the latitude which is allowed to the writer in putting his own interpretation upon those words, something heroic is still expected; whereas, if he attempt to paint from nature, how little that is heroic should he describe! <sup>13</sup>

The writer of this story feels that some apology is due to his readers for having endeavoured to entertain them so long with the adventures of one of whom it certainly cannot be said that he was fit to be delineated

as a hero. It is thought by many critics that in the pictures of imaginary life which novelists produce for the amusement, and possibly for the instruction, of their readers, none should be put upon the canvas but the very good, who by their noble thoughts and deeds may lead others to nobility, or the very bad, who by their declared wickedness will make iniquity hideous.<sup>14</sup>

In *The Small House at Allington* there is an amusing little colloquy between Bell and Lily Dale in which, above the banter, one hears a serious expression of Trollope's realism.

"I am quite sure she was right in accepting him, Bell," she said, putting down the book as the light was fading, and beginning to praise the story.

"It was a matter of course," said Bell. "It always is right in the novels. That's why I don't like them. They are too sweet."

"That's why I do like them, because they are so sweet. A sermon is not to tell you what you are, but what you ought to be, and a novel should tell you not what you are to get, but what you'd like to get."

"If so, then I'd go back to the old school, and have the heroine really a heroine, walking all the way up from Edinburgh to London, and falling among thieves; or else nursing a wounded hero, and describing the battle from the window. We've got tired of that; or else the people who write can't do it now-a-days. But if we are to have real life, let it be real."<sup>15</sup>

The novel must reproduce life—or create a reasonable facsimile thereof. But there are limitations. Realism must not degenerate into naturalism. The novelist must remember his role as mentor and moralist. Yet Trollope sides with the rational Bell against the more sentimental Lily. Bell would have properly read the character of both Adolphus Crosbie and Johnny Eames. She would never have been swept off her feet, as was the impressionable Lily, by Crosbie's suave social dexterity; and she would have been content with Johnny's querulous devotion, knowing that heroes are creatures of romance and men are merely human. I think it likely that Trollope's failure to humor those of his readers who pestered him for a sentimental marriage between Lily and Johnny arose from his conviction that her pouting romanticism should not be encouraged. The concept of the hero, of course, is incompatible with a clear-

eyed, unblinking view of human nature, and he who wishes to comment significantly upon his fellows must free himself from rigidly stylized characterizations.

With his heroines, as well as with his heroes, Trollope avoids the stereotypes. He is particularly insistent on the comparative plainness of his most charming young ladies. The tradition of the ravishing beauty has no appeal for the creator of Lucy Robarts, Grace Crawley, Lucy Morris, Rachel Ray, *et al.* Ellen Glasgow once remarked that "since *Jane Eyre*, no novelist has had the courage to make a heroine good and plain and beloved."<sup>16</sup> One begs leave to recall Trollope's young ladies. They are attractive, to be sure, for they have honest eyes and a sunny open face that connotes good sense, stout courage, and well-being of mind and heart. But among them there is no Helen of Troy, no Princess Casamassima. Trollope was content to leave lovely apparitions and phantoms of delight to the poets and to the more imaginative of his brother novelists.

Trollope's tendency to see the novel as fable rather than as allegory also accounts for the shading down of the villains from one-dimensional lay figures to complex psychological studies. There is no Simon Legree or Daniel Quilp or Count Fosco in Trollope. But the avoidance of such perilously slanted characters was a lesson that he had to learn by experience. In the early novels his characters were caught up in the folds of Victorian melodrama, and he had difficulty in keeping the villains from illustrating the worst traditions of the sorriest era of the stage. In *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* Captain Myles Ussher is the handsome and heartless seducer of a trusting Irish girl. In *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* Barry Lynch, hoping to gain control over his sister's share of their father's estate, first tries to have her committed as insane, and then, failing that, attempts to murder her. In *La Vendée* Adolphe Denot, the villainous turncoat and "Mad Captain," is driven by furious jealousy into contradictory and incredible acts of violence. Not passion but these shop-worn villains spin the plots. That Trollope had to take refuge in such adventitious aids is a tacit admission of failure to create meaningful characters. But a few years later he was able to develop villains who are not automata functioning in the

interests of a hackneyed plot. In *Can You Forgive Her?* George Vavasor is a disgruntled young man whose reckless temper nearly ruins several lives and drives him at last into attempted murder. But George is a psychoneurotic case, not a trashy villain. Again, in *He Knew He Was Right* the conventional villain has given way to a keen study in mad jealousy. Louis Trevelyan, in whom Trollope anticipates present-day psychological inquiries, is a character sketch of such dimensions that I should like to discuss it at greater length.

*He Knew He Was Right* is primarily the story of Louis Trevelyan. All the other plots, and there are a great many of them, are bricks to ballast a very large ship. But the story of Louis Trevelyan is no pastoral idyll to be taken up by admirers of Charlotte Yonge and Anne Thackeray. It does not have that "sweet-savour," which in a weak moment Trollope declared to be "true to nature."<sup>17</sup> It is a vivid but depressing study in morbid psychology, objectively presented. Henry James calls the chapter entitled "Casalunga," a description of Trevelyan's mental torture after he had abducted and hidden his son at a retreat near Siena, "a powerful picture of the insanity of stiffneckedness."<sup>18</sup> But the public was quite baffled by such a character. Accustomed to sharply drawn differentiations of type, they could not respond intelligently to a deeply disturbed, even psychotic, personality on the terms in which he was presented. Their training in fiction had taught them to regard such persons as villains, and they were unable to comprehend Trollope's attempt to develop sympathy. From the reviews I judge that most readers were so repelled by Louis that they ignored him in favor of less upsetting characters. Thus, the *Daily Telegraph* spoke of seven minor figures as "absorbing . . . everyday characters,"<sup>19</sup> but never so much as mentioned Louis Trevelyan or the main plot. Today one is quite willing to accept Henry James's judgment:

Louis Trevelyan, separated from his wife, alone, haggard, suspicious, unshaven, undressed, living in a desolate villa on a hill-top near Siena and returning doggedly to his fancied wrong, which he has nursed until it becomes an hallucination, is a picture worthy of Balzac.<sup>20</sup>

I am sorry that Trollope did not live to read this tribute.

In *The Prime Minister*, also, one notes how far Trollope has traveled since *The Macdermots*. Ferdinand Lopez is an unscrupulous adventurer who has no qualms about sacrificing his wife to further his political ambitions. But he is no ordinary blackguard. Tall, dark, and handsome, "an accomplished linguist, and a very clever fellow,"<sup>21</sup> Lopez must be filed in another category of wickedness from that which fits simpler villains. These latter disturbers of the peace are social misfits who brood over their inability to adjust to realities. Trollope emphasizes the psychic instability of all these characters when he says of Lopez: ". . . he was essentially one of those men who are always, in the inner workings of their minds, defending themselves and attacking others."<sup>22</sup>

In the same year as *The Prime Minister* Trollope published another Irish story, *An Eye for an Eye*. The subject and the theme carry us back to *The Macdermots*: a young officer seduces a pretty country girl, then tries to escape the familiar consequences. Result: he is murdered by the girl's enraged mother, the baby dies, and the girl goes to France, where she joins her scapegrace father, who lives by blackmailing the officer's family. This operatic plot is redeemed from utter bathos only by the credibility of the weak, vacillating, rationalizing young villain of the piece.

To the end, Trollope might occasionally borrow a plot from the Minerva Press, but in characterization he became a sure artist. His skill may again be documented by reference to the villains. Admittedly, early and late, there are times when the part is typed. Obadiah Slope, for instance, has few redeeming characteristics. But he is out of the comedy of humours and therefore should not be judged by realistic criteria. Augustus Melmotte is almost a caricature of the predatory capitalist. But he is avowedly a symbol of what Trollope interpreted to be the decadent commercialism of the age, and symbols may presumably be forgiven a generalized abstractness. When such characters do not serve a purely emblematic function, however, they are very human. Let me take two quite minor figures. Nathaniel Sowerby, the rascal whose financial irresponsibility in *Framley Parsonage* is almost Mark Robarts' undoing, is shown to be "a clever man, and a pleasant companion, and always good-

humoured when it so suited him. He was a gentleman, too, of high breeding and good birth."<sup>23</sup> Hugh Walpole has understood by what measure of superior craftsmanship Sowerby's complex moral code transcends the simple inanities of traditional villains.

He is the finest possible example of Trollope's understanding of and feeling for scoundrels. Trollope has a true, almost Balzacian genius for all the shabby gentlemen in the City. And Mr. Sowerby is the best of all the shabby gentlemen. His letters to Mark Robarts are masterpieces, his little interview with Tom Tozer a gem, his final decline and ruin a proper and never cruel climax.<sup>24</sup>

Quintus Slide, the slippery editor of "The People's Banner," a well-known scandal sheet, is a masterpiece of plausible villainy. His editorial attacks on Phineas Finn and the Duke of Omnium, and his conduct toward Robert Kennedy, mark him as an unprincipled scoundrel. His windy liberalism is as thoughtless as it is blatant. Yet he is clever: a shrewd, quick, incisive journalist, instinctively skillful at making the worse cause appear the better. Trollope had a genius for tracing the rationalizations of his villains, and he nowhere betters the self-exculpation of Quintus Slide in the chapter "An Editor's Wrath" in *Phineas Redux*. When a novelist takes pains to present the point of view of persons whose service to the plot is purely auxiliary, his characters are no mere puppets.

Though valiant attempts at character differentiation are made, it is doubtless inevitable that the author of forty-seven novels should have repeated a number of character patterns. In reading Trollope one often has a vague feeling that a certain character is familiar. Without Dickens's bursting imagination Trollope was often reduced to dressing up old characters in new disguises. But these attempts are never very deceptive. It is not difficult to perceive the features of Johnny Eames in Phineas Finn. John Grey of *Can You Forgive Her?* is repeated in Harry Gilmore of *The Vicar of Bullhampton*. Lady Lufton, the domineering mother, is also found as Lady Aylmer in *The Belton Estate*. The matrimonial difficulties of Lord Lufton in *Framley Parsonage* are also those of Lord Silverbridge in *The Duke's Children*. The fierce temper and reckless

moods of George Vavasor in *Can You Forgive Her?* are seen again in Lord Chiltern of *Phineas Finn*. Sir Raffle Buffle, the officious bureaucrat of *The Small House*, is a redaction of Sir Gregory Hardlines of *The Three Clerks*. And there are many other such parallels.

Trollope is at his best when he allows his imagination to dwell on character apart from the requirements of plot. This fact perhaps explains the superiority of his older characters over his younger characters. The young people must act out the familiar prenuptial drama, with the posturings and caperings hallowed by time and custom. Little remains in these routines that is truly spontaneous. The forms are rigid and the patterns set. For the Victorian audience Trollope did not dare to alter appreciably the expected story of tender love, thwarted at some point, of course, by circumstances of pride, of jealousy, of chance misunderstanding, but triumphant at last over all difficulties. Characters expected to objectify such commonplaces of the literary imagination cannot have much elasticity. It was beyond Trollope's skill to tell the oldest of stories with fresh emphasis. His ingenuous young lovers have the grace and charm of their naïveté, but the experiences of life have been so edited and fragmented that their world appears insubstantial and aerial. This unreality cannot be charged solely against Trollope's age, for the dynamism of such novelists as the Brontës was not to be smothered by local and temporal convention.

Originality is scarcely to be expected where the narrative is so little ambitious, but something must be offered by way of compensation. In his more casual "tale-spinning" Trollope offers nothing. Such novels as *The Claverings*, *The Golden Lion of Granpère*, and *Marion Fay* suffer from the author's apparent conviction that the public appetite for the puerilities of romantic love is insatiable. When to the tedium of predictable event is added the weight of inert characters and scrappy writing, only the long patience of Victorian readers can compass three arid volumes.

For Trollope the love story was not enough. It is rarely enough. One must be supremely endowed with gifts of imagination and style to make shining the tarnished metal of long-exposed plots. The emotional intensity of an Emily Brontë or of a Thomas Hardy at



his best (as in *Tess*) can, of course, break through the limitations of material, but Trollope rarely attempted in the love story emotional involvements of any depth. The hazards upon which the young people stumble are obviously placed, and to sweep them aside requires merely a bit of doing. Tragedy, it is clear, presents richer opportunities to deal significantly with love than does the comedy of all's well that ends well, but such a novel as *Far from the Madding Crowd* reminds one that the traditional courtship romance can be more than stereotyped narrative. Trollope could fashion nothing enduring out of such material, however, for it did not stimulate him creatively. His young people are tedious and monotonous; their gaiety is forced and their love-making wholly without fire. Cathy Earnshaw's passionate outcry "Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff!" could not have been better understood by Trollope than by others of his generation.

Trollope's younger characters, then, may charm by their ingenuousness or amuse by the seriousness with which they take themselves, but Russell Fraser is undoubtedly justified in speaking of their "emotional and intellectual sterility."<sup>25</sup> We must therefore look elsewhere for the source of Trollope's perennial appeal. We find it, I believe, in the older characters. Since Trollope did not begin to publish until he was in his thirties, and since *Barchester Towers*, his first success, did not appear until he was forty-two, he brought to even his earliest work a settled maturity. He was separated emotionally from the subject matter of lending library fiction from the onset of his career, but a number of considerations encouraged him to hew closely to the line of the popular novel. For Mr. Mudie's clientele he decked out his books superficially with the colors of spring romance, but these tints have long since faded. Meanwhile, the autumnal shades around Barchester Close and Matching Priory have proved color-fast and unwearyingly engaging. Trollope lost his heart not to Eleanor Bold and Lily Dale but to Septimus Harding and Plantagenet Palliser.

Since the conventional love story did not interest Trollope, and since he either could not or would not treat love on any other level, he found creative satisfaction in giving life and spirit to an-

other category of characters. The older people, to whom he gave his closest attention, have a much firmer reality than the younger people. A character such as Adolphus Crosbie, though no mere stereotype, simply walks through a part, playing the faithless lover with a jaunty insouciance. Johnny Eames as the faithful lover, waiting upon Lily Dale with the blind and somewhat idiotic devotion of a Captain Dobbin, is very little better. And it is not merely an instance of the comparative attractions of a sympathetic and an unsympathetic character. Johnny Eames as the able but rather brash junior clerk, outfacing loneliness and frustration, is much truer. But better and truer than any of the young men is Dr. Thorne, watching over his beloved niece, encouraging sobriety in his alcoholic patient Roger Scatcherd, and shedding over all his acquaintances a benevolence that never becomes sticky. Trollope's aversion to heroes does not extend to Dr. Thorne. In one of his most significant comments, bearing on the slant of his real interest as a novelist, he remarks, "Those who don't approve of a middle-aged doctor as a hero, may take the heir of Greshamsbury in his place; and call the book, if it so please them, 'The Loves and Adventures of Francis Newbold Gresham the Younger.'" <sup>26</sup>

Better and truer than the young heroines is Martha Dunstable, the heiress of the ointment of Lebanon, unmarried when we first know her but no longer a girl. Here is no insipid adolescent nursing dreams of improbable Lochinvars, but a woman of great poise and no little wisdom. Completely honest and disconcertingly candid, she is sustained in her frankness by confidence in her position.

Since she had been brought out into the fashionable world some one of her instructors in fashion had given her to understand that curls were not the thing. "They'll always pass muster," Miss Dunstable replied, "when they are done up with bank-notes." <sup>27</sup>

Yet she never presumes upon her wealth. Caring neither for rank nor for social prestige, she judges people solely on their merits. The circumstances of her marriage to Dr. Thorne are conceived and carried out with admirable delicacy and tact. It would be difficult to find a more firmly developed minor character in Victorian fiction.

No minor character, but one of the most carefully considered studies Trollope ever made, is Lady Mason, the erring but sympathetically presented protagonist of *Orley Farm*. A middle-aged woman, guilty of a forgery in the interests of her son, and the bride-to-be of a wealthy, titled, but elderly lover, she is the kind of mature, troubled soul he knew best how to portray. Since she also illustrates the limits of his ability to carry such a sketch through, I may be permitted to describe her place in *Orley Farm* in some detail.

By the time Trollope came to *Orley Farm* the Victorian sensation novel was sweeping everything before it. 1862 was, in fact, the year of *Lady Audley's Secret*, which is often taken as the best example of this popular type. Now Trollope, as we know, did not care for the premises or the methods of the sensation novelist, yet as a businessman writer, conscious of what the public wanted, he was forced to compromises and concessions. These he was able to make very skillfully without abandoning his firm position as a realist. In *Doctor Thorne* he had come perilously close to giving way to sensationalism in adopting his brother's idea of a good plot. In *Orley Farm* he is in no such danger, for the novel is essentially a study in character. Trollope complains in the *Autobiography* that the plot "has the fault of declaring itself, and thus coming to an end too early in the book."<sup>28</sup> It is true that we learn of Lady Mason's guilt very quickly, but the novel whose interest is based on discovering whether or not a forgery had been committed would be quite un-Trollopiian. The question of guilt is no more important here than it is in *The Last Chronicle*. In *Lady Audley's Secret*, however, there is no interest whatever beyond that which may be found in discovering at last that George Talboys was pushed down a well by his wife and left for dead.

Lady Audley is as unreal as the story told about her, and little more can be said for the other characters. Mary Elizabeth Braddon simply did not have the skill to make us feel keenly the predicaments in which her characters are placed. Lady Mason, on the other hand, is one of the clearest and surest characters in Victorian fiction. She is a forger, yet she is a good woman. The law declares

her "Not Guilty," but we know that the laws of compensation have not been disproved. The misguided mother, who has risked all for a son who turns out to be a most objectionable prig, opinionated and willful, suffers the tortures of the damned. The moment of her confession to Sir Peregrine Orme is conceived with great art and executed with a sensitiveness and balance that is quite beyond praise. Here is a scene of which the perils were tremendous, as indeed they were in the entire relationship between the gallant old gentleman and the by no means young widow. One false word and the whole structure of this pathetic love affair would come tumbling down. That word is not given, and the dignity of the episode is preserved.

Two scenes following upon Lady Mason's confession indicate the power that Trollope has when he meets an emotional situation squarely and the depth of his failure when he avoids it or passes it off conventionally. When Lady Mason leaves Sir Peregrine, knowing that she has sealed her future in the blackness of disgrace and irrevocable misery, she retires to her room at his suggestion and sitting on the bed, her teeth chattering both from the bitter mid-winter cold and from nervous exhaustion, casts up the self-abasements of a future irredeemably desolate. The many critics, Victorian and modern, who have charged against Trollope the inability to picture tragedy without shrillness or calculated sentiment, have forgotten this terrible scene. Yet after such an artistic triumph Trollope contrives a moment later that Lady Mason should be visited by Edith Orme, who offers a few words of consolation and forgiveness.

Many will think that she was wrong to do so,<sup>29</sup> and I fear it must be acknowledged that she was not strong minded. By forgiving her I do not mean that she pronounced absolution for the sin of past years, or that she endeavoured to make the sinner think that she was no worse for her sin. Mrs. Orme was a good churchwoman but not strong, individually, in points of doctrine. All that she left mainly to the woman's conscience and her own dealings with her Saviour,—merely saying a word of salutary counsel as to a certain spiritual pastor who might be of aid.<sup>30</sup>

This is disappointing. Trollope has shirked his task, first by giving us through summary a scene that should have been dramatic, and

second, by straddling the moral problem. The truth is, of course, that Trollope had no consistent view of his character. Lady Mason was never intended to be evil, but there is an evident change after her guilt is established that cannot be accounted for solely in terms of the deepening of her nature. The change is in Trollope's attitude toward her. Hester Prynne is shown to have become through her sin more thoughtful, more tolerant, more spiritual. This is not true of Lady Mason, whose character is relatively constant. Trollope has led us to a kindlier view because he has himself become more sympathetic.

I may, perhaps, be thought to owe an apology to my readers in that I have asked their sympathy for a woman who had so sinned as to have placed her beyond the general sympathy of the world at large. If so, I tender my apology, and perhaps feel that I should confess a fault. But as I have told her story that sympathy has grown upon myself 'till I have learned to forgive her, and to feel that I too could have regarded her as a friend.<sup>31</sup>

In the middle of his novel, however, he is not sure of Lady Mason. Consequently, he is careful to take the conventional ethical point of view. But whatever may be his failures with Lady Mason, she has a reality which none of his young lovers can challenge.

Trollope failed to impart reality to his love stories primarily because he was not interested in the characters. Where young romance is secondary to more mature concerns, he could concentrate on adult responses and on people whose problems stimulated him imaginatively. The outlines of individual young people become fuzzy in a short time and merge into a generalized type. But the figures of Lady Mason, Dean Arabin, Josiah Crawley, Mme. Max Goesler, Lady Laura Kennedy, and perhaps a dozen others are individually sharp and clear. It is significant that Trollope never wrote of the experiences of childhood, as did Dickens so notably, and that of the few children who appear in his pages none is in any way memorable. Trollope does not even attempt to interest us in little Lord Popenjoy for himself, though the dramatic possibilities of scenes so designed are attractive; the matter at issue is solely

his paternity and the various social relationships among adults which hinge on the establishment of that fact.

The rejection of young people as subjects demanding his closest attention emphasizes both Trollope's strength and his weakness. He resisted the pale story formulae of his day insofar as they might tend to become central in his novels, and in doing so he became a novelist of a certain distinction. When his resolution was strong enough, he sometimes touched the periphery of greatness. But his resolution was often insufficient, and he then gave himself up to the currents of a very murky tradition. His achievement is therefore limited. It is obvious that a creative artist whom we are to regard as indisputably great must have no such limitation. He must make Romeo's story as meaningful as Lear's. This Trollope could not do. If the exaction seems to be unfair in view of the special aims of the comedy of manners, one can only plead that Jane Austen was equal to it. To the extent that Jane Austen made the love story more trenchant than did Trollope, Dr. Leavis is justified in his high regard for her genius. Greatness lies in the ability not only to give reality and vitality to *all* one's characters but to see the significance in every human action. While giving over many of his pages to the drama of courtship, Trollope unfortunately renders only surface details and tells us very little of value about an episode in life which despite overemphasis affords every writer an opportunity to show his originality and the reach of his emotional understanding.

In these days of the self-conscious novel it is sometimes difficult to remember that for the Victorian writer technique scarcely existed as a significant concept. The period produced some of the most vivid and entrancing characters in the history of fiction; yet if one judges by the obvious and superficial remarks of the novelists on their craft, it is probable that none could say precisely how his characters were developed. This situation arose not entirely because of the absence of a critical vocabulary. More important is the failure to think in terms of design and technique. Today any tyro in an undergraduate writing class can rattle off eight or ten "methods of characterization." That the tyro could not possibly produce one character of the slightest consequence or endurance is familiar evi-

dence that without insight and imagination a handbook knowledge of technique is fruitless. If Trollope knew any "methods of characterization," he left no evidence of it. His scanty remarks on this subject are so commonplace and indeed so banal as to suggest that he was only dimly aware of how he created his effects. Nevertheless, he understood fully the source of his appeal, and he undoubtedly knew more about technique than he chose to discuss. An experienced professional writer, to whom the "rules" of his art are second nature, is not always conscious of the A B C's, and might be hard put to it to explain that which he has long done automatically. It is not surprising, then, that even on that aspect of his novels in which his strength primarily rests Trollope is virtually silent.

Following the tradition of his period Trollope talks *about* his characters rather more than is approved today. He often exasperates the most sympathetic reader by his unfortunate penchant for introducing them at length in a purely expository manner. He is not so insensitive to dramatic values as is Scott, but he is capable, as in *The Prime Minister*, of long and arid stretches of prosy character description, analysis, and commentary. On this score he stands perhaps midway between Scott in *Waverley* and Virginia Woolf in *Jacob's Room*, where the character presentation is wholly dramatic—or scenic, to use the newer terminology. The modern novelist, who tries to avoid the tedium of summary, which is really a type of authorial intrusion, devises for the introduction and development of the characters a series of scenes. Only such summary is used as is necessary to link the scenes. Henry James, who rarely introduces more than ten characters and never more than fifteen (in *The Golden Bowl* there are only six), does not need to raise his eyes from the scene and is spared the necessity of authorial characterizations. With Trollope and the Victorians, introducing a hundred characters, a great deal of summary, both of plot and of character, is inevitable.

An examination of Trollope's practice, however, indicates that he employed most of the methods and devices of characterization that are standard today. One suspects that modern theorists have often succeeded merely in naming procedures that have long been

followed instinctively. It would serve no useful purpose to show in detail Trollope's habits with regard to each of eight or nine of these different techniques, but it may be worth while to glance at his approach to and his accomplishment in the three most important: characterization by description, by action, and by dialogue.

Trollope often spoke slightly of his ability to characterize by description. While it is true that he had no such talent as Dickens for seizing on an oddity of personal appearance or on a quirk of deportment that might be a clue to character, his hand was steady enough to trace out many sketches that are sharply and strikingly drawn. Most of these, it is curious to note, are of men: the elegant Squire Thorne, the irascible Roger Scatcherd, the "thin-minded, plodding, respectable" Plantagenet Palliser, the luxurious Maurice Maule, the voluble American Senator, the noisy but likeable rabble-rouser Ontario Moggs, and the horsy Captain Boodle, who "wore a cut-away coat, a coloured shirt with a fogle round his neck, [and] old brown trowsers that fitted very tightly round his legs." Among the ladies it is not the young heroines who on first description are immediately vital (Trollope works very slowly with them, developing sympathy through conduct rather than vividness through description) but the Dickensian comicks: the buxom Mrs. Greenow, who would be deterred by neither bashfulness nor false shame from displaying her £40,000; the unspeakable Baroness Banmann, with her double chin, moustache, and round black eyes; the audacious Wallachia Petrie, the Republican Browning; and, one might add, the beautiful and uninhibited invalid, Signora Madeline Neroni, with her "copious rich brown hair . . . worn in Grecian *bandeaux* round her head." Nevertheless, it is most important to remember that Mrs. Proudie, Trollope's best known character, is nowhere described in any detail. Such neglect of physical features emphasizes Trollope's desire here, and frequently elsewhere, to concentrate on personality traits.

We are not told, for example, what the Duke of St. Bungay looked like, but his character as a man and statesman is noted most explicitly. It will be observed that the method is wholly expository.



The Duke was a statesman of a very different class [from Mr. Palliser], but he also had been eminently successful as an aristocratic pillar of the British Constitutional Republic. He was a minister of very many years' standing, being as used to cabinet sittings as other men are to their own armchairs; but he had never been a hard-working man. Though a constant politician, he had ever taken politics easy whether in office or out. The world had said before now that the Duke might be Premier, only that he would not take the trouble. He had been consulted by a very distinguished person,—so the papers had said more than once,—as to the making of Prime Ministers. His voice in council was esteemed to be very great. He was regarded as a strong rock of support to the Liberal cause, and yet nobody ever knew what he did; nor was there much record of what he said. The offices which he held, or had held, were generally those to which no very arduous duties were attached. In severe debates he never took upon himself the brunt of opposition oratory. What he said in the House was generally short and pleasant,—with some slight, drolling undercurrent of uninjurious satire running through it. But he was a walking miracle of the wisdom of common sense. He never lost his temper. He never made mistakes. He never grew either hot or cold in a cause. He was never reckless in politics, and never cowardly. He snubbed no man, and took snubbings from no man. He was a Knight of the Garter, a Lord Lieutenant of his county, and at sixty-two had his digestion unimpaired and his estate in excellent order. He was a great buyer of pictures, which, perhaps, he did not understand, and a great collector of books, which certainly he never read. All the world respected him, and he was a man to whom the respect of all the world was as the breath of his nostrils.

But even he was not without his peacock on the wall, his skeleton in the closet, his thorn in his side; though the peacock did not scream loud, the skeleton was not very terrible in his anatomical arrangement, nor was the thorn likely to fester to a gangrene. The Duke was always in awe about his wife.<sup>32</sup>

One is reminded by this passage of the useful distinction which Percy Lubbock, following Henry James, makes between "picture" and "drama," between the pictorial and scenic methods of development in fiction. The question is one of the reader's relation to the novelist. With Trollope the reader faces toward the storyteller and

listens to him; with James the reader turns toward the story and watches it.<sup>33</sup>

Every novelist learns at last that there is no effective substitute for showing character by means of action. But not all are able to manage this essential technique with skill. Like Dickens, and perhaps like every other first-rate novelist, Trollope often suggests in a few deft lines what inferior writers have to spell out at length with kindergarten blocks, though, to be sure, this is not the area of his greatest skill.

Burgo went on, and made his way into the house at Grosvenor Square, by some means probably unknown to his aunt, and certainly unknown to his uncle. He emptied his pockets as he got into bed, and counted a roll of notes which he had kept in one of them. There were still a hundred and thirty pounds left. . . .

He breakfasted upstairs in his bedroom,—in his bed, indeed, eating a small *paté de foie gras* from the supper-table, as he read a French novel. There he was still reading his French novel in bed when his aunt's maid came to him, saying that his aunt wished to see him before she went out. "Tell me, Lucy," said he, "how is the old girl?"

"She's as cross as cross, Mr. Burgo. Indeed, I shan't;—not a minute longer. Don't now; will you? I tell you she's waiting for me." From which it may be seen that Lucy shared the general feminine feeling in favour of poor Burgo.

Thus summoned Burgo applied himself to his toilet; but as he did so, he recruited his energies from time to time by a few pages of the French novel, and also by small doses from a bottle of *curaçao* which he had in his bedroom. He was utterly a pauper. There was no pauper poorer than he in London that day. But, nevertheless, he breakfasted on *paté de foie gras* and *curaçao* and regarded those dainties very much as other men regard bread and cheese and beer.<sup>34</sup>

Here in a brief scene we may note some of Trollope's virtues and one of his failings. Burgo lolling in bed after a breakfast of *paté de foie gras* and *curaçao* (and one should not overlook the implications of the French novel) bespeaks one aspect of his nature, and his easy familiarity with the servant girl bespeaks another. Trollope had hit off Burgo's character neatly and dramatically. But he could

not resist the temptation to editorialize. The adjective "poor," which would otherwise be objectionable as sentimental, is in this instance sound because it is used ironically. The last sentence, however, with its reference to the fare of other men, is surely a mistake in artistry; in elaborating the obvious by such an intrusion Trollope relaxes the dramatic tension.

But Burgo Fitzgerald is a minor character. Let us see what Trollope does with the most fully conceived and developed character he created, Josiah Crawley. No one who has read *The Last Chronicle of Barset* will ever forget the scene in which Mr. Thumble, the bishop's "angel," brings to Hogglegstock Dr. Proudie's inhibition and insists that he must take over the duties of the curacy while Crawley is under suspicion of theft.

"You will not undertake the duty, Mr. Thumble. You need not trouble yourself, for I shall not surrender my pulpit to you."

"But the bishop—"

"I care nothing for the bishop in this matter." So much he spoke in anger, and then he corrected himself. "I crave the bishop's pardon, and yours as his messenger, if in the heat occasioned by my strong feelings I have said aught which may savour of irreverence towards his lordship's office. I respect his lordship's high position as bishop of this diocese, and I bow to his commands in all things lawful. But I must not bow to him in things unlawful, nor must I abandon my duty before God at his bidding, unless his bidding be given in accordance with the canons of the Church and the laws of the land. It will be my duty, on the coming Sunday, to lead the prayers of my people in the church of my parish, and to preach to them from my pulpit; and that duty, with God's assistance, I will perform. Nor will I allow any clergyman to interfere with me in the performance of those sacred offices,—no, not though the bishop himself should be present with the object of enforcing his illegal command." Mr. Crawley spoke these words without hesitation, even with eloquence, standing upright, and with something of a noble anger gleaming over his poor wan face; and, I think, that while speaking them, he was happier than he had been for many a long day.<sup>35</sup>

In this scene, which is followed by Crawley's magnificent letter to his bishop, Trollope is at his best. No wonder he was tempted to

dramatization.<sup>36</sup> The unflinching honor, the stubborn rectitude, and the cross-grained pride of Crawley are suggested in such masterly fashion that in his ultimate triumph one cheers the author for a task well done. Yet a closer look reveals how Trollope has guided our judgment with emotional language, not content to let the characterization stand by its own strength. "Eloquence" and "noble" are adjectives that should be supplied by the reader, not the author; and "poor wan face" is hardly to be defended as objective characterization. Again Trollope could not forego acting as Chorus; and if he does not give in to sentimentality as easily as did Thackeray, he was at least vulnerable to the same emotion.

*The Trollope Reader*, a recent anthology of "prime bits," illustrates how difficult it is to catch in a few paragraphs the essence of Trollope's projection of character. This selection, though excellent in its way, would never give a reader unfamiliar with Trollope any feeling for his real accomplishment as a novelist, for in spite of an occasional lively or telling scene his talent did not show itself in brilliant thumb-nail sketches. *The Bedside Bassetshire*, another recent anthology, which excerpts larger segments, is therefore more successful from this point of view. In like manner the critic who would illustrate Trollope's skill in building character through dialogue is faced with almost insurmountable problems. Striking scenes of this kind—Warden Harding standing on his principles against the Archdeacon's counsel of expediency, Elias Gotobed scandalizing Mr. Mainwaring's little dinner party, Lady Mason refusing Sir Peregrine Orme—are those in which character has been and is being developed patiently and at length. Often there is no dramatic culmination—merely a series of colloquies in which, as eavesdroppers, we catch in the play of repartee a hint here and a hint there. In fact, it is only with characters developed humorously that we may pick up in a page of dialogue all that we must know.

In an earlier chapter I said a word about Trollope's stand against extraneous dialogue. In contending that there is no trap more alluring and none more terrible than that of devising idle chatter for a set of sophisticated characters, Trollope is abreast of current thinking about the novel. But he has a tendency in characterization, as

we have seen, to put too much faith in the power of exposition. Post-Jameians tell us that the function of exposition is merely to provide useful information and to link the scenes. In *The Writing of Fiction* Edith Wharton explained that "dialogue should be reserved for the culminating moments, and regarded as a spray into which the great wave of narrative breaks in curving toward the watcher on the shore."<sup>37</sup> Dramatization of Mrs. Wharton's novels has been notably successful, for the characterization is written into the dialogue. With Trollope this is only partially so. In the twentieth century it has been common for a novelist (Hemingway, for example) to reduce summary perhaps to ten per cent of the total pages. In the nineteenth century summary probably runs from fifty to seventy-five per cent.

One other method of characterization, in which Trollope was remarkably, almost uniquely successful, should be mentioned: the letter. Virtually every Trollope critic has felt obliged to note Trollope's surprising skill in finding the right tone for a variety of letters by a variety of characters. In his hands the letter becomes a most useful property, very much more flexible for narrative and descriptive purposes, as well as for purposes of characterization, than it had been in the stiff epistolary novel.

It is perfectly obvious that no enduring work was ever written simply by following "methods," by adhering to rules. Trollope violates almost every canon of the art of fiction, yet he pleases discriminating readers. Criticism has never adequately explained his hold on his public, and it may be that it is not possible to do so. In his own day reviews were accustomed to praise him for his "knowledge of human nature," but this is a cliché without much meaning. C. H. Rickword has pointed out that knowledge of human nature may be possessed by psychoanalysts and parish priests who are incapable of a page of narrative.<sup>38</sup> What is important is the degree of illusion which the novelist creates and the significance of that illusion as a symbol of humanity. The illusion, it is clear, must come from the characters. It is therefore to be noted that Trollope, like Turgenev, began his novels with a few interesting characters but no plot. Charles Reade, on the other hand, kept elaborate note-

books which he filled with clippings of curiosa from the press. From documented references to extraordinary events he fashioned his novels. The characters do not contribute to the plot. That they should do so, and do so unremittingly, is now universally accepted; but before Henry James only Jane Austen and Emily Brontë held rigorously to this principle.<sup>39</sup>

Since James is and must be the central point of reference in any technical discussion of the novel, and since James commented at length on Trollope and his characters,<sup>40</sup> some investigation of the grounds of his important judgments is in order. Unfortunately, James's reviews, written early in his career, were of Trollope's weaker novels. They gave him full opportunity to emphasize his contention that the proper study of fiction is ideas: John Grey in *Can You Forgive Her?* proves that Trollope "is simply unable to depict a mind in any liberal sense of the word";<sup>41</sup> *The Belton Estate* is "without a single idea" and "incompetent to the primary functions of a book . . . —to suggest thought";<sup>42</sup> *Miss Mackenzie* indicates that his powers of observation are wasted on trivial material.<sup>43</sup> He reproduces common life successfully, but he fails to understand the human heart. His characters are only "the halves of men and women." They lack passion, nobility, and idealism; and instead of reflecting life upon the details, borrow it from them, and so borrow the contagion of death.

When, however, immediately after Trollope's death James returned to the novels for a full-dress study, his point of view underwent a surprising change. To the mature critic Trollope is no longer a shallow and unimaginative realist. Though James can still mistake his man to the extent of speaking of "his perpetual 'story,' which was the only thing he cared about,"<sup>44</sup> he quickly contradicts himself by commenting on Trollope's "extreme interest in character,"<sup>45</sup> which is the essence of his love of reality, and his happy, instinctive perception of human varieties. The purpose of each of his tales is "to tell us what certain people were and what they did in consequence of being so."<sup>46</sup> Unlike the successors of Balzac, "he had no airs of being able to tell you *why* people in a given situation would conduct themselves in a particular way."<sup>47</sup> Indeed, his per-

ception of character was naturally more just and liberal than that of the naturalists, and his apprehension of the real makes him one of the most trustworthy of the writers "who have helped the heart of man to know itself."<sup>48</sup> It is through his perception of character, then, that Trollope produces for his readers the shock of recognition.

James's trenchant analysis is as close as we are likely to come in capturing Trollope's elusive appeal, but perhaps a word can be added. It is true that Trollope felt all daily and immediate things in a simple, direct, salubrious way; and it is true that the illusion is produced by slowly accreted testimony as to the temper, the tone, the passions, the habits, and the moral stature of a certain number of nineteenth-century Britons. But this is an explanation that does not explain. A sensitive newspaper reporter might on these terms render his social milieu with considerable vividness. What James did not know was the intensity with which Trollope perceived his characters and the intimacy of his imaginative association with them.

[The novelist] desires to make his readers so intimately acquainted with his characters—that the creatures of his brain should be to them speaking, moving, living, human creatures. This he can never do unless he knows those fictitious personages himself, and he can never know them unless he can live with them in the full reality of established intimacy. They must be with him as he lies down to sleep, and as he wakes from his dreams. He must learn to hate them and to love them. He must argue with them, quarrel with them, forgive them, and even submit to them. He must know of them whether they be cold-blooded or passionate, whether true or false, and how far true, and how far false. The depth and the breadth, and the narrowness and the shallowness of each should be clear to him. And, as here, in our outer world, we know that men and women change,—become worse or better as temptation or conscience may guide them,—so should these creations of his change, and every change should be noted by him. On the last day of each month recorded, every person in his novel should be a month older than on the first. . . .

It is so that I have lived with my characters, and thence has come whatever success I have obtained. There is a gallery of them, and of all in that gallery I may say that I know the tone of the voice, and the colour of the hair, every flame of the eye, and the very clothes they wear. Of each man I could assert whether he would have said these or the other

words; of every woman, whether she would then have smiled or so have frowned. When I shall feel that this intimacy ceases, then I shall know that the old horse should be turned out to grass.<sup>49</sup>

If there is any explanation of the vitality of Trollope's characters, it is to be found in these lines.



## 7 THE TROLLOPIAN TRIAD ❧

### *Humor*

THE CASUAL reader whose knowledge of Victorian fiction does not go much beyond Dickens is accustomed to think of humor as the pervasive characteristic of the novel of the period. Though the generalization will falter before a close inquiry, it is true that the instinct to amuse was more sharply pointed in the nineteenth century than it is today. Reliance on this obvious fact has perpetuated the phrase "the Victorian humorists" as descriptive of the novelists in general. No critical ingenuity is required to show the inadequacies of this formula. Many of the best novelists are intensely, even excruciatingly, solemn. Whether or not it is true, as has been alleged, that Charles Kingsley was never observed to laugh, it is certain that merriment plays no part in his fiction.<sup>1</sup> Humor is not an adjunct of the Brontëan novel, nor is it prominent in the stories of Mrs. Gaskell, Charles Reade, or Wilkie Collins. An occasional deft remark, of course, out of which twinkles an amused perception of mankind's oddities and contradictions, will be found wherever there is a novelist of distinction. The successful writer must have taught himself early to observe the idiosyncratic behavior of his fellows. But to be a professional humorist implies differences of perspective and intent that may be useful for purposes of classification.

It is fashionable these days to follow Dr. Leavis and others who regard Dickens as outside the great tradition of the English novel.<sup>2</sup> The *Scrutiny*, critics, it is clear, place no very high value on the work

of those who seek first of all to amuse. Certainly the three novelists who receive their sacerdotal blessing—George Eliot, Henry James, and Joseph Conrad—are not lacking in high seriousness. George Eliot, to be sure, is not without a certain folk humor, especially in *Adam Bede*, but her purposes were largely ethical and philosophical. James and Conrad, both historians of fine consciences, moved rapidly away from the Victorian aesthetic. But Leavis is willing to admit Jane Austen into the foyer of his House of Fame as a prescient anticipator of the tradition. This is very confusing, in spite of explanations, for it is difficult to see in Jane Austen's novels anything more than the triumph of the comedy of manners. Such an achievement is not to be depreciated, as Leavis knows; yet through that door, once opened, must enter much of Dickens and a great deal of Trollope. If social comedy is to be approved, Dickens must be reckoned with. His spectacular effects have lost their brilliance, perhaps, but there remains a bodily evocation of the human comedy that has stirred the imagination of the world's readers.

Trollope had little sympathy with Dickens's exaggerations, but like Dickens he considered humor one of the novel's necessary adjuncts. He apparently assumed, however, that there was about his work little, if any, Dickensian flavor. On this point he was self-deceived. A Christian Socialist like Kingsley, devoted to the propagation of a set of moral principles, might resist the imitative impulse. Trollope, in spite of his devotion to Jane Austen and Thackeray, produces unmistakable Dickensian overtones. Mrs. Proudie is out of Dickens. So probably are Ontario Moggs, Augustus Melmotte, Elias Gotobed, and a great many others. Furthermore, it is not likely that a number of Trollope's most successful scenes would have been cast in the form in which we find them without the example of Dickens. One thinks of the electors' dinner in *Rachel Ray*, the American Senator's speech in St. James's Hall, and Mrs. Proudie's soirée.

The last-named scene may be useful in pointing up the differences between Dickens and Trollope and between Jane Austen and Trollope. Dickens would no doubt have emphasized the farcical elements in the clash of personalities and in the absurdities of mis-

understanding which Mrs. Proudie's entertainment produced. Jane Austen, establishing her humorous and satiric effects more subtly, would never have descended to the slapstick of Mrs. Proudie's torn dress. In spite of the fact that Trollope brings off this famous scene successfully his subsequent failures in depicting social high jinks indicate a basic uneasiness with farce material. In his treatment of this and similar plot situations Trollope stands midway between the tradition of the early nineteenth-century popular stage farce, which Dickens adopted and adapted, and the old-new tradition of the comedy of manners, intellectualized and enriched by the genius of Jane Austen. He becomes more easy as he approaches Miss Austen's drawing room, where few different types are seen and where there is little action, but where nuances of character can be studied in unhurried detail.

Trollope's admiration for Thackeray was perhaps based on a recognition of superb stylistic gifts which he himself did not have. His admiration for Jane Austen was probably based on a recognition of social insights which they shared. The indebtedness to Jane Austen, readily acknowledged, may have been greater than Trollope supposed; we see today, at any rate, the closest possible kinship. This is to be found, among other things, in their common appreciation of the humor of understatement—low pulsed, emotionally slack, apparently artless and naive, but ineffably sly. Trollope's humor, like Jane Austen's, grows out of the totality of character concepts. The source of our amusement at Archdeacon Grantly is not in what he says, but in what he *is*. Chapter vi of *Barchester Towers* opens as follows:

'Good heavens!' exclaimed the archdeacon, as he placed his foot on the gravel walk of the close, and raising his hat with one hand, passed the other somewhat violently over his now grizzled locks; smoke issued forth from the uplifted beaver as if it were a cloud of wrath, and the safety-valve of his anger opened, and emitted a visible steam, preventing positive explosion and probable apoplexy. 'Good heavens!'—and the archdeacon looked up to the gray pinnacles of the cathedral tower, making a mute appeal to that still living witness which had looked down on the doings of so many bishops of Barchester.

'I don't think I shall ever like that Mr. Slope,' said Mr. Harding.

'Like him!' roared the archdeacon, standing still for a moment to give more force to his voice; 'like him!' All the ravens of the close cawed their assent. The old bells of the tower, in chiming the hour, echoed the words; and the swallows flying out from their nests mutely expressed a similar opinion. Like Mr. Slope! Why no, it was not very probable that any Barchester-bred living thing should like Mr. Slope!

'Nor Mrs. Proudie either,' said Mr. Harding.

The archdeacon hereupon forgot himself. I will not follow his example, nor shock my readers by transcribing the term in which he expressed his feeling as to the lady who had been named. The ravens and the last lingering notes of the clock bells were less scrupulous, and repeated in corresponding echoes the very improper exclamation. The archdeacon again raised his hat, and another salutary escape of steam was effected.

Our amusement here arises not from the scene itself but from what Trollope does with it by way of character revelation. Superficially, the effect derives from the attendant detail and from the interpretative comment. But we know the meekness and charity of Mr. Harding, and we are beginning to see how the archdeacon's formidable dignity is tinged with self-righteousness, self-importance, and a massive trust in his own judgment. As the novel runs its course, the jigsaw pieces of the archdeacon's character fall into place. In this scene we have the exposition of his choleric nature in humorous terms. Trollope almost never subordinates characterization to humor for its own sake. To do so is to follow the tradition of Dickens rather than that of Jane Austen. The archdeacon, a serious man, is a humorous creation, amply conceived and fully realized. Trollope presents him with masterly objectivity, implying, not stating, the amusing contradictions of his character. The hauteur of his pride is redeemed by the sincerity of his faith; his arrogance of office and his worldliness are softened by his spiritual and temporal loyalties. He is a complete human being, with Josiah Crawley Trollope's best character. But where the perpetual curate of Hogglestock is a somber study in implacable pride and embittered frustration, the Archdeacon of Barchester is a humorous study in self-complacency. Grantly is the quintessence of Trollopian characteriza-

tion, and his discussion with his wife on one memorable occasion after they had retired for the night is the quintessence of Trollopiian humor. Jane Austen might have written this scene, had she permitted herself such liberties, but it is out of Dickens's reach. This is not to say that Trollope is a keener humorist; but his purposes and his methods are different, and in this instance, I think, more artistic.

By instinct and to some extent by training Dickens wrote as a dramatist. His novels break structurally into acts and scenes. One will remember individual scenes long after their sequence and plot significance have been forgotten; indeed, I have seen readers search their memory fruitlessly for the name of a novel in which they recall certain episodes in extraordinary detail. Trollope's novels, on the other hand, have no particular form. Plot is improvised around the characters. This spontaneous composition, with its emphasis on character rather than on plot, promotes the relaxed ease of the informal essayist, and provides Trollope with a fine opportunity to indulge himself in humorous asides.

The genius of Dickens, like that of Shakespeare, was equally at home in high comedy and low comedy. It is perhaps through the latter, however, that we know him best: Bardell *v.* Pickwick, Copperfield's drinking party, Christmas at Dingley Dell—these are unforgettable moments in fiction. On another level one might mention Flora Finching's reminiscential rambles, Mr. Micawber's leonine courage in the face of bearish fortune, and Oliver's request for more—this last, contrary to the usual interpretation, a scene that is played almost wholly for its humor. Dickens's incomparable versatility brought him success in many techniques. Trollope, a novelist of narrower talent, was not happy with broad comedy. Dickens's humor is in the main a swiftly moving surface current; Trollope's humor is a slow drifting undercurrent. Dickens can move the soberest reader to hilarity; Trollope rarely attempts to provoke more than a smile. Here are three examples:

'It isn't decent. I say that with all due deference to Lady Chiltern's better judgment. It's not the kind of thing that men do. I care less about it than most men, but even I object to such a proposition when it is made

so openly. No doubt I am old.' This assertion Mr. Maule made in a weak, quavering voice, which showed that had his intention been that way turned in his youth, he might probably have earned his bread on the stage.<sup>3</sup>

'It was so dreadful,' said Lady Pomona;—'so very dreadful. I never heard of anything so bad. When young what's-his-name married the tallow-chandler's daughter I thought it would have killed me if it had been Dolly; but this was worse than that. Her father was a methodist.'<sup>4</sup>

And so went off the warden's party, and men and women arranging shawls and shoes declared how pleasant it had been; and Mrs. Goode-nough, the red faced rector's wife, pressing the warden's hand, declared she had never enjoyed herself better; which showed how little pleasure she allowed herself in this world. . . .<sup>5</sup>

Hilarity often dies and cannot quickly be recovered, but the smile may persist through repeated readings. This is perhaps why Trol-lope wears so well.

### *Pathos*

We have seen that the Trollopian formula for fiction calls for a story of common life to be enlivened by humor and sweetened by pathos. In point of fact, however, there is not a great deal of pathos in the novels. But it may be worth while to examine such scenes and characters as Trollope has given us, if only to note the distance that separates his practice from that of Dickens and Thackeray.

Criticism today demands of the novelist a much firmer objectivity of presentation than was popular a century ago. Ernest Hemingway, who though an emotional writer always keeps the emotion at arm's length, may be taken as an exemplar of the turn away from nineteenth-century subjectivity. The Victorian tradition provided for a relentless tugging on the heartstrings, the subject of early or lingering death offering a never-failing device to this end. Dickens and Thackeray played the sentimental gambit with determination, and the deaths of Little Nell, Paul Dombey, and Colonel Newcome are among the best-known scenes in English

fiction. That these episodes, so carefully designed for emotional exploitation, are no longer effective is a fact of sociological as well as of literary significance.

Since Trollope was fundamentally a creator of drawing-room comedy, he was not so frequently tempted toward the abyss of the false pathetic. But it is a fact of some importance in estimating his literary taste and discrimination that when his material called for pathetic treatment he never became maudlin. In the familiar matter of death scenes it is instructive to compare the passing of Septimus Harding with any similar scene in Victorian fiction. The quiet dignity of the Warden's death, deeply moving without a trace of mawkishness, is perfectly articulated with the simplicity and sincerity of his life. It would be difficult to find anything in Victorian fiction better than this chapter in *The Last Chronicle of Barset*. It might be noted, in passing, that Thackeray feels compelled to reiterate, principally by authorial intrusion, that Colonel Newcome's virtue is of a very special sort. Trollope, on the other hand, does not editorialize about Mr. Harding, content to develop his character dramatically.

In the *Autobiography* Trollope is characteristically reserved about his triumphs, but he does speak with affectionate approval of one of his pathetic scenes. *The Three Clerks*, he says, "contains the first well-described love-scene that I ever wrote. The passage in which Kate Woodward, thinking that she will die, tries to take leave of the lad she loves, still brings tears to my eyes when I read it. I had not the heart to kill her" (pp. 93-94). Trollope had every reason to be proud of his description of the parting of Charley and Katie. The scene skirts perilously near the area of unwholesome sentimentality, but Trollope's strong sense of decorum asserts the controls of realism with highly effective results.

Another effective scene is to be found at the conclusion of *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, one of Trollope's few tragedies. Thady Macdermot, thinking to protect his sister from her seducer, kills Captain Myles Ussher. He is tried, convicted of murder, and hanged.<sup>6</sup> During the trial his sister dies and his senile father becomes completely insane. To make convincing the pathos of such

a Senecan tragedy is no bad test of an experienced novelist's skill. That Trollope succeeded notably in his first book is the measure of his promise as an artist.

By and large, however, Trollope's use of the pathetic, unlike Dickens's and Thackeray's, is to be found not in set scenes but in characters. Josiah Crawley, apostle of a stern faith, with his brilliant mind and prickly personality, unyielding martyr to a rigorous concept of truth and duty, homely and ineffective angel—where in literature is there a character so rich in his potential for good, so thin and meagre in his accomplishment? He is Trollope's most pathetic creation. There are others. Carry Brattle, the "fallen woman," is a sympathetic study in misfortune. "Fair she had been; with laughing eyes, and floating curls"—but she is led down the primrose path. Trollope does not believe that her error, sincerely repented of and fully expiated by a tortured spirit, should entail the everlasting bonfire. He asks of society that charity which should be abounding to the worst of sinners. It is easy to overdo the pathos inherent in the story of the penitent Magdalen, but Trollope, if he never reaches the sublime, stays well this side the ridiculous. His social philosophy is strictly Victorian, but it does not spill over into the bathetic.

*Orley Farm* is, of course, not strictly a tragedy, but the pathos in the trial of Lady Mason is as genuine and as moving as Trollope ever created. In a desperate attempt to protect the interests of her son, Lady Mason, as we have seen, long ago forged a codicil to her elderly husband's will. The story of aroused suspicions, a trial, and an acquittal under shadowy circumstances has a dramatic intensity which Trollope never surpassed. It is out of the errors into which people are led by a selfless desire to aid others that the deepest tragedy is born. In *Lady Mason* Trollope has a good woman, a compassionate woman, essentially honest and law-abiding, who takes it upon herself illegally to right an obvious wrong. On this occasion, at least, Trollope enables us to see into not merely the heart but also the mind of one of his characters. Sympathy is created here, as one suffers with Lady Mason the tortures of a smirched conscience and the tensions developed from attacks on a false position. The pathos of her dilemma is spotlighted with subtlety and



restraint, emphasizing, by force of contrast with the shoddy and conventional tragedies to come, the unevenness of Trollope's talent.

As we know, Trollope was no writer of tragedy. On a few occasions, however, he did vary the comic pattern—with indifferent results, except in the instance of the psychological novel *He Knew He Was Right*. Louis Trevelyan, protagonist of this novel, is one of Trollope's most vivid characters. Insanely jealous of his wife, brooding on fancied wrongs, his life hopelessly embittered and frustrated, Trevelyan evokes both pity and terror in the monomania to which he succumbs. Oddly enough, Trollope did not realize the magnitude of his achievement. In the *Autobiography* he writes, "I do not know that in any literary effort I ever fell more completely short of my own intention than in this story. . . . I look upon the story as being nearly altogether bad" (p. 266). Trollope explains that he failed to create sympathy for his character. In this judgment critics today do not concur. Hugh Walpole calls the novel Trollope's *Timon of Athens* and asserts that the chapters describing Trevelyan's psychoneurotic decay are worthy of Stendhal or Balzac. Christopher La Farge writes, "The progress of Louis Trevelyan from an idle, rich, good-looking, affectionate husband, to the mad invalid whose death was made premature and miserable by his own weakness is in the grand manner."<sup>7</sup> Disturbed perhaps by the darkness of his main plot, Trollope balanced the Trevelyan narrative with three colorful but conventional sub-plots. It has been noted above that the articulation of these plots is very weak, and it may be that Trollope's curious discontent with his work arises from his sense of the novel's diffuseness. Certainly the Trevelyan story is told with power and with an effective pathos, inherent but unexpressed.

A less successful use of pathos is to be found in the "anonymous" novels, *Nina Balatka* and *Linda Tressel*. The first of these, though not a tragedy, is Trollope's somberest story. The gloom of *Nina* is so pervasive that the author himself, four years after its publication, wrote to John Blackwood offering a novel of similar plot but one which unlike *Nina* "does not end unhappily."<sup>8</sup> He had remembered the tone but forgotten the plot of his own novel! Of course, the story *should* have been a tragedy, the happy ending being created

only by the most unfortunate and unconvincing plot-wrenching. Hardy would not have flinched from carrying Nina's misdirected affection to its only plausible denouement, but Trollope was not equal to sacrificing the stubborn Victorian cliché of happy love. In the character of Nina there is indeed, as Trollope says, "much that is pathetic,"<sup>9</sup> for the plight of the delicate and affectionate Christian girl in love with a Jew who does not appreciate her has strong tragic possibilities. But the intended sympathy for Nina is very nearly lost in one's impatience with her imperceptive tolerance of a suspicious, sullen, and brooding lover. *Linda Tressel* is even less satisfactory. The tragic element apparent in a summary of the plot is never keenly felt by the reader. An unattractive story such as *Linda* might have been redeemed by vital and credible characters, but there is virtually no possibility of developing pathos out of a set of caricatures.

Elsewhere in scattered novels there are tragic situations of varied intensity. Two illustrations will perhaps suffice. In *An Eye for an Eye* we find a simple but well contrived single plot. The story, however, develops characteristically into melodrama so absurd as to negate the reality of a touching and ingratiating heroine. *Sir Harry Hotspur of Humblethwaite*, Trollope said, "had for its object the telling of some pathetic incident in life rather than the portraiture of a number of human beings."<sup>10</sup> Once again the pathos fails to develop as planned because the tragedy is conventional and artificial. Trollope's lukewarm tragedies result from a timid and unimaginative reproduction of the patterns of romantic plotting. Apparently he did not see the incongruity of a master of the comedy of manners wrestling with a plot bad enough to be rejected by a librettist of Italian opera.

### Style

Prose theorists from Walter Pater to I. A. Richards have warned critics of the danger of separating subject matter and style. Thought and expression, we are told, are, or should be, inseparable. This is

certainly so. There can be no doubt that in any well designed and well wrought work form and substance must be a unit. In expository prose this is, of course, obvious; but even in prose fiction the prose and the fiction should be one. The critic must be wary, therefore, of abstracting style as a quality which exists alone. This does not mean, however, that it cannot be discussed in terms of the novelist's materials and purposes.

In an earlier chapter I had occasion to glance at Trollope's concept of the function of style in the novel. It is now necessary to examine with some care his own practice. Such an inquiry needs no justification, for among the many score of Trollope critics none has made a detailed examination of his style. This omission is not surprising, for it is a curious fact that the work of *none* of the nineteenth-century novelists has been put under the microscope, critics having long contented themselves with a few generalizations endlessly repeated. Trollope has never received more than a few sentences. Among those who have expressed opinions there is little critical unanimity. Judgments range from that of Meredith, who denied Trollope any style whatever ("the absence of style"), to that of Walpole and others, who find his style both deliberate and sound, admirably suited to the relaxed tempo and unpretentious sweep of the narrative.

It is true that Trollope was not a stylist in the Meredithian sense. He lacked the lyric gifts of the poet, the flaming imagination, the lambent phrase. He almost never attempts a description of nature, an exercise for which Meredith had great gifts. *Framley Parsonage* contains a rare passage of this kind, and it is perhaps worth a glance, for it illustrates Trollope's limitations in one area of writing.

It was a beautiful summer afternoon at that delicious period of the year when summer has just burst forth from the growth of spring; when the summer is yet but three days old, and all the various shades of green which nature can put forth are still in their unsoiled purity of freshness. The apple blossoms were on the trees, and the hedges were sweet with May. The cuckoo at five o'clock was still sounding his soft summer call with unabated energy, and even the common grasses of the hedgerows were sweet with the fragrance of their new growth. The foliage of the

oaks was complete, so that every bough and twig was clothed; but the leaves did not yet hang heavy in masses, and the bend of every bough and the tapering curve of every twig were visible through their light green covering. There is no time of the year equal in beauty to the first week in summer: and no colour which nature gives, not even the gorgeous hues of autumn, which can equal the verdure produced by the first warm suns of May.

Hogglestock, as has been explained, has little to offer in the way of landskip beauty, and the clergyman's house at Hogglestock was not placed on a green slopy bank of land, retired from the road, with its windows opening on to a lawn, surrounded by shrubs, with a view of the small church tower seen through them; it had none of that beauty which is so common to the cosy houses of our spiritual pastors in the agricultural parts of England. Hogglestock parsonage stood bleak beside the road, with no pretty paling lined inside by hollies and laburnums, Portugal laurels and rose-trees. But, nevertheless, even Hogglestock was pretty now. There were apple-trees there covered with blossom, and hedgerows were in full flower. There were thrushes singing and here and there an oak-tree stood in the roadside, perfect in its solitary beauty.<sup>11</sup>

This is pretty but conventional, with an old-fashioned stateliness. The author of it cannot be said to be entirely without style, but the air is a bit sweetish and the colors are a bit faded. There are few signs of a sharp eye and a glowing imagination. But description is a very special kind of writing, one which to the novelist should be of secondary importance. Still, descriptive touches may be colorful and striking, and it is therefore a temptation to decorate one's pages with shimmering phrases. It is a temptation the novelist would do well to resist, however, unless he has convinced himself that every word is functional in his design. A sense of the concreteness of the things one perceives *can* be transmitted without ornament. It is clear that Trollope, knowing that he did not have the fancy for descriptive writing, chose to project his sense of scene and character by other means. In an era when most successful novelists were working for startling effects through high-pitched tones and violent colors, Trollope was content with the blandest and most prosaic writing ever to come from a major novelist.

One may grant at once that Trollope is prosaic. To do so is not to deny his greatness. A poet, obviously, dares not be prosaic, and the informal essayist is so at his peril. But the values of fiction are such that other qualities may successfully counterbalance a stylistic deficiency. A knowledge of human behavior patterns, an understanding of the dynamics of plot, an ear for the rhythms of ordinary speech—all these may compensate for a style that is not highly imaginative. There is also a kind of story for which a poetic style would be quite unsuitable: the disreputable adventures of a picaro, a heated contest between political aspirants, a faithful narrative of the barracks and trenches. There should, of course, be congruity between subject matter and style. This is the principle of harmoniousness which earlier we saw Trollope emphasizing. Now, the social life of a few rural clergymen, though it might be handled poetically, can surely be approached on the level of an imaginative transcription of reality. Style need not be absent from even a factual transcription of reality; when the imagination plays a part, some kind of style other than the purely pedestrian must inevitably result. When such characters and materials as Trollope discovered are viewed with a humorous and lightly satiric eye, we have a highly individualized novel. Let us look at a familiar scene from *Barchester Towers*: Mrs. Proudie's soirée.

'Bishop of Barchester, I presume?' said Bertie Stanhope, putting out his hand, frankly; 'I am delighted to make your acquaintance. We are in rather close quarters here, a'nt we?'

In truth they were. They had been crowded up behind the head of the sofa; the bishop in waiting to receive his guest, and the other in carrying her; and they now had hardly room to move themselves.

The bishop gave his hand quickly, and made his little studied bow, and was delighted to make—. He couldn't go on, for he did not know whether his friend was a signor, or a count, or a prince.

'My sister really puts you all to great trouble,' said Bertie.

'Not at all!' The bishop was delighted to have the opportunity of welcoming the signora Vicinironi—so at least he said—and attempted to force his way round to the front of the sofa. He had, at any rate, learnt

that his strange guests were brother and sister. The man, he presumed, must be Signor Vicinironi—or count, or prince, as it might be. It was wonderful what good English he spoke. There was just a twang of foreign accent, and no more.

‘Do you like Barchester on the whole?’ asked Bertie.

The bishop, looking dignified, said that he did like Barchester.

‘You’ve not been here very long, I believe,’ said Bertie.

‘No—not long,’ said the bishop, and tried again to make his way between the back of the sofa and a heavy rector, who was staring over it at the grimaces of the signora.

‘You weren’t a bishop before, were you?’

Dr. Proudie explained that this was the first diocese he had held.

‘Ah—I thought so,’ said Bertie; ‘but you are changed about sometimes, a’nt you?’

‘Translations are occasionally made,’ said Dr. Proudie; ‘but not so frequently as in former days.’

‘They’ve cut them all down to pretty nearly the same figure, haven’t they?’ said Bertie.

To this the bishop could not bring himself to make any answer, but again attempted to move the rector.

‘But the work, I suppose, is different?’ continued Bertie. ‘Is there much to do here, at Barchester?’ This was said exactly in the tone that a young Admiralty clerk might use in asking the same question of a brother acolyte at the Treasury.

‘The work of a bishop of the Church of England,’ said Dr. Proudie, with considerable dignity, ‘is not easy. The responsibility which he has to bear is very great indeed.’

‘Is it?’ said Bertie, opening wide his wonderful blue eyes. ‘Well: I never was afraid of responsibility. I once had thoughts of being a bishop, myself.’<sup>12</sup>

This is good Trollope, and I think it is unmistakable. The impudence of Bertie and the discomfort of the bishop are caught with an economy of phrase that is superb. Here too is a mock gravity of description and a suggestion of ironic understatement that is characteristic of Trollope at his best. I do not know who else among the Victorian novelists could have written this scene. Certainly not Meredith.

Meredith’s reaction to Trollope is fully predictable. He had

brought to fiction a poet's sensitiveness, an aureate and rhetorical style, and a witty, intellectualized manner. By comparison Trollope may seem tame and commonplace. He is not, however, vapid. He has his own particular strength and grace, and they arise from his simplicity, a quality which escaped Meredith as completely as it escaped Henry James. But for Meredith a writer as simple as Trollope had *no* style. It is not, of course, a convincing test of the intrinsic merits of two novelists that one is widely read and another is largely ignored; it is probably true, however, that a work which is still very popular among experienced readers a century after its composition is at least *satisfactory* as a piece of writing. This is undoubtedly a distinction of the Barsetshire novels.

The virtue of a restrained style, and it is a very great one, is that the author will not be caught in extremes of manner that make him ridiculous. So Trollope, who does not have eloquence and thus does not rise to the heights of expressed power often reached by Meredith and James, will not descend to bathos which greater writers occasionally touch. The elegance of *The Egoist* is beyond Trollope, but he would never have given way to the emotional paroxysms of *The Tragic Comedians*. Similarly, the possessor of a lucid, controlled style (it is not God-given, but hard-won) will not write as did Henry James in his tortuous last phase. This sentence, for example, is found at the beginning of the famous twenty-page chapter of *The Golden Bowl* in which Adam Verver opens a door:

The justification of the push he had applied, however, and of the push, equally sharp, that, to shut himself in, he again applied—the ground of this energy was precisely that he might here, however briefly, find himself alone, alone with the handful of letters, newspapers and other unopened missives, to which, during and since breakfast, he had lacked opportunity to give an eye.<sup>13</sup>

It is not merely a matter of euphony, though few readers have enjoyed being bumped over James's knobby sentences; it is also a matter of intelligibility. Whatever Trollope might have thought of Herbert Spencer's *Philosophy of Style*, he would have approved

this key statement: "The relative goodness of any two modes of expressing an idea may be determined by observing which requires the shortest process of thought for its comprehension."<sup>14</sup>

In his official capacity at the Post Office Trollope was called upon to write many papers and reports. He prepared these with care, and took pride in the clarity and succinctness of his style. In expository writing of this kind there are perhaps no other criteria than intelligibility and brevity. When he turned to creative writing, the habits of training in ease, fluency, and simplicity were invaluable, and his style continued to be direct, precise, and unadorned rather than expansive, convoluted, and figurative. Simplicity, however, is a most elusive virtue. It will not come to him who merely whistles for it, as Dr. Thorne discovered when he sat himself down to write Martha Dunstable a proposal of marriage.

He would use the simplest, plainest language, he said to himself over and over again; but it is not always easy to use simple, plain language,—by no means so easy as to mount on stilts, and to march along with sesquipedalian words, with pathos, spasms, and notes of interjection.<sup>15</sup>

Simplicity and ease, both hard-won, as they must be, are the keys to Trollope's style. Unfortunately, none of the early novels survives in manuscript, but beginning with *Framley Parsonage* (1860) virtually all are extant and have been traced. They are the most remarkable manuscripts I have ever seen. On page after page there are no corrections—no erasures, no emendations, no interlinear interpolations. Then there will be a page with several additions—heightening an incident, sharpening a phrase, forming a characterization. Then there will be further pages of the cleanest copy any novelist ever sent a printer. I do not know quite what to make of Trollope's statement that he revised his work. The manuscripts do not bear this out, and I think there is no possibility that what survive are revisions of earlier texts. There can be little doubt that Trollope wrote more rapidly and revised less frequently than any comparable English novelist. That simplicity which he achieved he had taught himself to attain while writing, in his own phrase, *currente calamo*.



It is time to examine a typical passage. Let us choose a descriptive piece, for in this kind of writing an author most quickly reveals the quality of his imagination and his sense of word values. In the opening chapter of *Orley Farm* Trollope sets the scene for his story.

And now a word or two as to this Orley Farm. In the first place let it be understood that the estate consisted of two farms. One, called the Old Farm, was let to an old farmer named Greenwood, and had been let to him and to his father for many years antecedent to the days of the Masons. Mr. Greenwood held about three hundred acres of land, paying with admirable punctuality over four hundred a year in rent, and was regarded by all the Orley people as an institution on the property. Then there was the farm-house and the land attached to it. This was the residence in which Sir Joseph had lived, keeping in his own hands this portion of the property. When first inhabited by him the house was not fitted for more than the requirements of an ordinary farmer, but he had gradually added to it and ornamented it till it was commodious, irregular, picturesque, and straggling. When he died, and during the occupation of his widow, it consisted of three buildings of various heights, attached to each other, and standing in a row. The lower contained a large kitchen which had been the living-room of the farmhouse, and was surrounded by bake-house, laundry, dairy, and servants' room, all of fair dimensions. It was two stories high, but the rooms were low, and the roof steep and covered with tiles. The next portion had been added by Sir Joseph, then Mr. Mason, when he first thought of living at the place. This also was tiled, and the rooms were nearly as low; but there were three stories, and the building therefore was considerably higher. For five-and-twenty years the farm-house, so arranged, had sufficed for the common wants of Sir Joseph and his family; but when he determined to give up his establishment in the City, he added on another step to the house at Orley Farm. On this occasion he built a good dining-room, with a drawing-room over it, and bed-room over that; and this portion of the edifice was slated.

The whole stood in one line fronting on to a large lawn which fell steeply away from the house into an orchard at the bottom. This lawn was cut in terraces, and here and there upon it there stood apple-trees of ancient growth; for here had been the garden of the old farm-house. They were large, straggling trees, such as do not delight the eyes of modern gardeners; but they produced fruit by the bushel, very sweet

to the palate, though probably not so perfectly round, and large, and handsome as those which the horticultural skill of the present day requires. The face of the house from one end to the other was covered with vines and passion-flowers, for the aspect was due south; and as the whole of the later addition was faced by a verandah, which also, as regarded the ground-floor, ran along the middle building, the place in summer was pretty enough. As I have said before, it was irregular and straggling, but at the same time roomy and picturesque. Such was the Orley Farm-house (I, 7-8).

It is difficult to see how any writer could be less precious. The style is spare and lean, with an obvious avoidance of the decorative and ornate. There are very few adjectives and no color. Trollope's first purpose is to make us *see* Orley farm-house (the house at Harrow Weald in his youth) as he saw it. We must be able to follow his description and retain an image of the scene. A tumble of sparkling sentences rolling up to iridescent poetic effects in the manner of Ruskin often by its sheen merely blinds us to what we should really see. Trollope's simplicity and directness give us with admirable economy the picture which we must share with him.

When he published *Nina Balatka*, Trollope did not expect that anyone would trace its authorship, for he had assumed a new style; but several critics, including R. H. Horne and Mrs. Oliphant, identified the writer at once. This fact would seem to indicate that Trollope had previously developed a manner so personal that even with conscious effort he could not shake free of its characteristics. But such is not quite the case. Trollope's style was never mannered, and in order to deceive his readers he must have found it necessary not so much to suppress himself as to adopt a style of more obvious colors. There is little that a critic could grasp as distinctively Trollopian, in the same way that Thackeray's ironic adjectives are indubitably Thackerayan, unless a bare, clear narrative prose with perhaps a faint air of sophisticated quaintness is so rare as to be unmistakable. It is more likely that those who recognized Trollope hit upon one of his favorite phrases, such as "it doesn't signify," than that they studied out a quality of diction or a pattern of sentence structure which could come from no other pen.

Such a style as Trollope's, without any showy or flashy qualities, is, then, not intensely personal. In general, Trollope submits himself to the scale of values which he finds current in his world, and his style is accommodately cool and deliberate. An iconoclast like Thackeray views society subjectively through the filter of his own ironic personality, with the result that his style is warm and deeply personal. His purpose is to project *himself* by means of an interpretation of human action. To some extent, perhaps, all novelists do this, but it is a matter of degree. Trollope's purpose is chiefly to transcribe his sense of the world. This he does objectively and concretely. The authorial intrusions, of course, provide a personal statement, but they break in upon a method largely objective and do not seriously alter the impression of a realistic rendering of observation and experience. At his best, by means of a style muted and unobtrusive, Trollope gives a lucid, impersonal account of his age.

Unfortunately, however, Trollope does not always give us his best. At moments of mechanical writing the lean, functional style can lapse into pedestrian "officialese." As has been noted, he does not often take himself or his task too seriously. If this is a defect, it is also a virtue; if he sacrifices a tension that is never absent from the greatest of novels, he gains a looseness which keeps his style easy rather than formal. Nevertheless, there are times when inspiration flags but the moving hand writes on. Such occasions are known to every prolific novelist. When this occurred Trollope dropped into the heavy jargon which among businessmen and politicians passes for an impressive prose style. This pompous, inflated manner is sometimes described as "goonish," and novelists, like literary critics, are not immune from its temptations. No period has escaped its influence, but the nineteenth century was particularly vulnerable. The worst offender among the better novelists was Disraeli, who was consistently ponderous and circumlocutory. Wonderful examples can be found in Charlotte Brontë, a novelist whose emotional strength usually carried her through, but who could write sentences which sound like an hilarious parody of a learned school-boy. With his lighter tone and less formidable purposes Trollope

is protected from the extremes of artificiality, bogus profundity, and self-conscious pedantry of diction. But examples of these errors can be found. In *The Claverings* Trollope tells us: "I should describe Mrs. Clavering in language too highly eulogistic were I to lead the reader to believe that she was altogether averse to such advantages as would accrue to her son from a marriage so brilliant as that which he might now make with the grandly dowered widow of the late earl" (p. 363). In *The Way We Live Now* Lady Carbury "went up to her room, disembarassed herself of her finery, and wrapped herself in a white dressing-gown. As she sat opposite to her glass, relieving her head of its garniture of false hair, she acknowledged to herself that age was coming on her" (I, 109). It is to be noted that whatever may have been Trollope's shortcomings as a stylist in the Meredithian sense, his good ear and innate sense of verbal appropriateness were such that one must hunt for such passages as the foregoing. In this regard it might be remembered that the novelist who when he wished to say "the tea was hot" wrote "the merit of warmth appertained to the beverage" was not Trollope but Meredith!

In another matter touching importantly on style, namely, the mechanics of decent composition, Trollope's carelessness, frequently noted by early reviewers, is not to be condoned. His grammar is often very bad; indeed his Wyckhamist and Harrovian masters, who might well have been surprised and perhaps chagrined at the success of the ugly duckling whose swanhood they had not perceived, should have found their direst predictions realized in Trollope's juvenile mistakes. He openly acknowledged grammatical errors and tells us that he was led into them by hastiness and by inadequate supervision of his manuscripts:

Rapid writing will no doubt give rise to inaccuracy,—chiefly because the ear, quick and true as may be its operation, will occasionally break down under pressure, and, before a sentence be closed, will forget the nature of the composition with which it was commenced. A singular nominative will be disgraced by a plural verb, because other pluralities have intervened and have tempted the ear into plural tendencies. Tautologies will occur, because the ear, in demanding fresh emphasis, has forgotten that

the desired force has been already expressed. I need not multiply these causes of error, which must have been stumbling-blocks indeed when men wrote in the long sentences of Gibbon, but which Macaulay, with his multiplicity of divisions, has done so much to enable us to avoid. A rapid writer will hardly avoid these errors altogether. Speaking of myself, I am ready to declare that, with much training, I have been unable to avoid them. . . . Very much of my work I have read twice in print. In spite of this I know that inaccuracies have crept through,—not single spies, but in battalions.<sup>16</sup>

Whatever may be the explanation, Trollope was guilty of many solecisms. Comparatives, for example, gave him a great deal of trouble. He could write "taller than her" (*The Three Clerks*, p. 24), "poor devil like he" (*Sir Harry Hotspur*, p. 80), "grander people than him" (*Orley Farm*, I, 13), "higher than her" (*Rachel Ray*, p. 108), "sweeter than them" (*Orley Farm*, II, 184), etc. He was not always sure about the object of prepositions ("nobody but you and I" [*Orley Farm*, II, 56]), and he sometimes fell into ambiguity through careless placement of modifiers: "'We shall be very happy to see you,' Mrs. Furnival had said, backing the proposition which had come from her daughter without any great fervour." The context of this sentence makes it clear that the last phrase modifies "backing," not "come." Some of the foregoing examples are taken from dialogue, and it may therefore be argued that Trollope committed the error deliberately in the interests of natural speech. My study of these and other instances, however, has convinced me that the errors are *not* intentional.

It would be folly to argue that Trollope is a great stylist. He did not have the poetic imagination of Emily Brontë, the slashing wit of Thackeray, the incandescent humor of Dickens, or the deliberate intellectualism of George Eliot—all of which are expressed in terms of style. What is left to Trollope? A great deal: a fluency that, in spite of Edith Wharton's contrary opinion,<sup>17</sup> rarely becomes tedious; a level of practical competence which if it never rises to high passion infrequently sinks to irredeemable bathos; an easy grace that carries one along on a full tide of flowing narrative. One cannot read Meredith, or Melville, or Stevenson, or James without

being conscious of style. On every page there are sentences which demand that we note how they are constructed and phrases which stimulate our laggard imagination. But in reading Trollope one rarely thinks of style. This is *not*, however, because, as Meredith suggested, Trollope has no style. It is rather because without verbal pyrotechnics he has talent enough to keep his story moving easily and his reader comfortably engrossed. It is a minor accomplishment of style, no doubt, the achievement of a journeyman novelist, but unlike some examples of more spectacular writing it has worn well through many generations of careful readers.

## 8 THE CHAOS OF CRITICISM \*

I KNOW nothing in literary history to match the divided opinion on Trollope's novels. Such disputes do not occur over Dickens or Thackeray or George Eliot or Meredith. Nobody, I think, considers *Martin Chuzzlewit* Dickens's best novel, or *Philip* Thackeray's best, or *Daniel Deronda* George Eliot's best, or *One of Our Conquerors* Meredith's best. Yet among Trollope's forty-seven novels there are only a handful that someone has not called his best. One might assume from this fact that the level of Trollope's work is remarkably steady. Having found a theme, a manner, and a tone, he was able to repeat his formula so successfully and with so little deviation from the established norm of quality that readers and critics found election among them extremely difficult. On the other hand, there is the widest possible divergence of opinion on a single title. If there is someone to declare that a given novel is certainly Trollope's best, there is someone to retort that it is without the slightest doubt his worst. These disagreements can be documented at every turn, but perhaps in the discussion of individual novels readers have caught a sense of the critical disparities and little more evidence need be brought forward. It is not my purpose here, furthermore, to sketch out at length the history of Trollope's reputation, interesting and significant for literary history as that would be, but to inquire into some of the reasons for the chaos in Trollopian criticism, and to attempt a few personal judgments by way of conclusion.

It is sufficiently clear why such a novel as *The Way We Live Now* was unappreciated in 1875 and why it is today the one novel which

all critics unite to praise. We do not view society as did the Victorians. Though it would be a mistake to speak of the decline of idealism in the twentieth century, it is now impossible to deceive ourselves about the nature of man and of society. The Spenglerian interpretation of history has succeeded the Darwinian. So far as Trollope criticism is concerned, it is almost possible to fix the date of the change. The last critic to bring in a verdict against *The Way We Live Now* was George Saintsbury, who in 1920, reading as a Victorian, found the novel a "dreary book."<sup>1</sup>

It is not sufficiently clear, however, why *The Bertrams*, which to Walpole should be eternally and remorselessly forgotten,<sup>2</sup> had for Harold Laski "all the magic of the Barchester series,"<sup>3</sup> and is to the Stebbinses of all Trollope's novels "the most modern in tone and the most haunting in mood."<sup>4</sup> Or why *Castle Richmond*, which to Walpole is one of Trollope's six absolute failures,<sup>5</sup> is to the Stebbinses "full of anxiety . . . poignant suspense . . . delicate restraint . . . without a misspent word."<sup>6</sup> Or why *The Belton Estate*, thought by Henry James "a work written for children . . . a stupid book . . . essentially, organically stupid,"<sup>7</sup> should be triple-starred by Sadleir as one of Trollope's five greatest books. Or why *The Three Clerks* should be to Walpole "a very poor novel"<sup>8</sup> and to Miss Curtis Brown, who discusses it at greater length than any other Trollope novel, a "lyrical account of innocent young love." Or why *The Claverings*, which Sadleir also three-stars, is not even mentioned by Miss Curtis Brown. One can find contrasting opinions on every one of Trollope's novels. I think there is no parallel to this situation in literary history.

What can one make of such judgments? Very little, in fact, for there is no rational explanation. If a novel is fresh and original, it may meet with a mixed reception, since traditionalists will resent what experimenters will applaud. But after the dust has settled for a century there should be fairly general agreement among the best qualified judges. For Trollope's novels this agreement does not exist. One would assume that the critics have been bringing to bear on these novels very different standards, but this can be true to only a limited extent and does not explain the wide discrepancies.



In the face of criticism which angles off in many directions and is united only in the proposition that in some of his novels Anthony Trollope wrote perceptively and engagingly of the social life he knew, one is driven to re-examine the bases of his own opinions and come to conclusions ratified by his own studies. Perhaps one suggestion, however, can be offered.

The significance of Trollope as a novelist may appear different to various readers as one senses and another fails to sense the meaning of his stories. Superficially, he is interested only in who marries whom. He seems to be concerning himself largely with the trivia of romantic love, or otherwise dwelling on the nonessentials of life. Basically, however, his interests are much wider; and he suggests by implication the expanding circles of his microcosm. In other words, Trollope, like Jane Austen, is a synecdochist. He is one with every artist who takes *his* corner of life as a symbol of all life.

Trollope's world is one of clergymen and sportsmen, of old politicians and young lovers. He manages very little story for these people, and he does not labor the psychology of their relationships. Yet he has an instinctive feeling for human responses that enables him to present character directly. T. S. Eliot has said, "What a creator of character needs is not so much knowledge of motives as keen sensibility."<sup>9</sup> Trollope's great gift is his sensibility. He does not spar with reasons or shadowbox with conjectures, but in his finest moments he not only transcribes what people say and do but suggests the subtleties of their association with consummate skill. Above all, he has the ability to make a casual life compelling. This is one of the rarest of all talents, one to which intellectual virtuosity and technical skill contribute very little. It comes almost entirely, I think, from the gift of sympathy. Even so simple a writer as Trollope is far too complex to be comprehended in a phrase or two, but I think one comes close to the source of his power when one recognizes the keenness of his sensibility and the warmth of his sympathy.

To be widely read in the Victorian period a novelist did not need much in the way of technical facility. A handful of colorful characters and a knack of maintaining narrative pace were often enough

to assure a solid popularity. Today a slick competence in design, in construction, and in the avoidance of emotional overwriting is expected even in beginners. The contemporary novel should be, and usually is, technically excellent. But, if one may venture a prediction, no more (and very possibly fewer) twentieth-century novels will be read a hundred years hence than Victorian novels. In the long records of time the measure of fiction must ever be the mind and heart of the novelist.

Trollope's mind, though not subtle, was wide-ranging and retentive, enabling him to seize and hold what is essential in many human experiences. We do not go to him for abstract speculations; we do not expect to find in his novels a philosophical system synthesized in a pattern of coherent symbols. But for an objective report on the behavior of men and women in a situation of human interest there is no one on whom we can rely with greater confidence. Trollope is dull only to those who have no interest in people.

One who is interested in others is usually interesting himself. I have found it to be so, at any rate, of Trollope, in the company of whose ghost I have lived much during the last fifteen years. He had a positive personality. On the surface he was gruff, stentorian, and somewhat abrasive; but in his deeper emotions he was shy, tender, affectionate, and almost womanly. Superficial observers saw only the noisy extrovert. His close friends recognized the quiet introvert. One is impressed most of all, I think, with his balance, his normality, his freedom from cant, and his pervasive common sense. These are the qualities which he carried most notably into his fiction, and it is they which have preserved his work into another century. Susceptible to many of the weaknesses of Victorian fiction—its looseness of structure, its inadequacies of style, its poverty of ideas—his novels nevertheless rise above fluctuations of taste. In their genial sanity and keen-eyed wisdom they offer not only a precious documentary record of the age in which he lived but a continuing source of that enchantment which only the rarest of God's spirits can provide.

### Chapter 1: Trollope and the Limits of His World

1. On this point there is some dispute. T. H. S. Escott says Trollope stood "some six feet in his socks" (*Anthony Trollope* [London, 1913], p. 191), but Julian Hawthorne speaks of him as "of middle height" (*Confessions and Criticisms* [Boston, 1887], p. 142). No doubt Escott is more nearly correct, for it is well known that heavy men always appear to be shorter than they really are.

2. Horace E. Scudder, *James Russell Lowell*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1901), II, 81-82.

3. Clara Louise Kellogg (Madame Strakosch), *Memoirs* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913), p. 348.

4. Quoted in A. H. Reed, *The Story of Otago* (Wellington: A. H. and A. W. Reed, 1947), p. 338. Charles Gavan Duffy, an Irishman who was Prime Minister at this time, was not popular.

5. See Robert P. Ashley, *Wilkie Collins* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1952), p. 105.

6. Walter Sichel, *The Sands of Time* (New York: Doran, 1924), p. 217.

7. Sir Henry Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life* (London: Longman's, Green, 1926), p. 137.

8. Sir Francis Cowley Burnand, *Records and Reminiscences*, 2 vols. (London: Methuen, 1904), II, 242.

9. *Correspondence of Henry Taylor*, ed. Edward Dowden (London, 1888), p. 297.

10. George Augustus Sala, *Things I Have Seen and People I Have Known*, 2 vols. (London, 1894), I, 30-31.

11. Walter Herries Pollock, "Anthony Trollope," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, LXVI (May, 1883), 912.

12. *The Letters of Anthony Trollope*, ed. Bradford A. Booth (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 473. This collection will be referred to hereafter as *Letters*.

13. *Anthony Trollope, An Autobiography*, ed. Bradford A. Booth (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1947), p. 272. Hereafter cited as *Autobiography*.

14. See the long passage discussing this subject in Trollope, *Phineas Redux* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), II, 302-304.

15. Lucy Poate Stebbins and Richard Poate Stebbins, *The Trollopes: The Chronicle of a Writing Family* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), p. 261.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 295.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 245.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 282.

22. See his remarks on the English dramatists, *infra*.

23. *Letters*, p. 394.

24. *Letters*, p. 446. Cf. the statement by the Stebbinses: "He had never attained the spiritual level at which he could work for the work's sake." (*The Trollopes*, p. 321.)

25. *Letters*, p. 286.

26. *The World*, October 17, 1883, p. 7.

27. Stebbins and Stebbins, *The Trollopes*, p. 282.

28. *North America* (London, 1866), I, 319.

29. *Autobiography*, p. 245.

30. The chimera of absolute equality is also discussed in Trollope, *Lady Anna* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), chap. xlvii, and in *The Golden Lion of Granpère*, chap. i.

31. I am indebted for a transcript of this letter to H. J. Hanham, Esq., of Sellwyn College, Cambridge. The letter is to be found (pp. 61-62) in Mary D. Baxter's *In Memoriam: R. Dudley Baxter* (privately printed, 1870).

32. *Autobiography*, p. 246.

33. Trollope, *Lady Anna*, p. 306.

34. See *Autobiography*, p. 34.

35. Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* (Boston, 1909), p. 133.

36. Trollope, *Phineas Redux*, I, 179. Cf. the statement of Alice Vavasor's father that "the nobility of England are pleasant acquaintances" (*Can You Forgive Her?* [London: Oxford University Press, 1938], I, 266).

37. Trollope, *The Way We Live Now* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), I, 153.

38. Trollope, *Ralph the Heir* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), I, 346.

39. Trollope, *Rachel Ray* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), p. 340.

40. *Autobiography*, p. 294.

41. Trollope, *Barchester Towers* (New York: Rinehart, 1949), p. 459.

42. *Letters*, p. 118.

43. Trollope, *West Indies and the Spanish Main* (New York, 1860), p. 380.
44. Stebbins and Stebbins, *The Trollopes*, p. 321.
45. John Hazard Wildman, "Trollope Illustrates the Distinction," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, IV (September, 1949), 102. One protesting voice has been raised against this misconception—that of Professor D. M. Alexander. See his "Trollope's Cosmopolitanism," *The Trollopian*, II (June, 1947), 3-10. I am much indebted to the careful scholarship of this article.
46. *Letters*, pp. 117-18.
47. *Letters*, p. 228.
48. Dr. Johnson's famous definition in his *Dictionary*.
49. *Letters*, p. 228.

## Chapter 2: Cathedral and Parish

1. This point is made in Trollope, "The Clergyman Who Subscribes for Colenso," chap. x in *Clergymen of the Church of England* (1866).

2. See Trollope, *Framley Parsonage* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), chap. xlii; and *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (London, 1867), chap. lxxxiv.

3. *Pall Mall Gazette*, July 24, 1866, pp. 3-4. Discussions of this subject are to be found in *Clergymen of the Church of England*, pp. 28-30, 92-104.

4. *The Guardian*, XXI (June 6, 1866), 602. *Clergymen of the Church of England* was also attacked by *The Contemporary Review* in what Trollope declared to be "the most ill-natured review that was ever written upon any work of mine" (*Autobiography*, p. 167). The author was undoubtedly Henry Alford, Dean of Canterbury, and first editor of the newly founded journal.

5. For a fuller exposition of this whole subject, see Bradford A. Booth, "Trollope and the *Pall Mall Gazette*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, IV (September, 1949), 149-51.

6. *Framley Parsonage*, p. 155. See also *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, chap. lxxxiii.

7. See, for example, John Hazard Wildman, "Trollope Illustrates the Distinction," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, IV (September, 1949), 101-10.

8. In *Clergymen of the Church of England* Trollope acknowledged the good done for the Church of England by Newman and Pusey, who "made episcopal idleness impossible, and clerical idleness rare. . . . They have built new churches, and cleansed old churches, and opened closed churches. They have put on fuel and poked the fire, till heat does really issue from it" (pp. 25-26). Newman returned the compliment when many years later he spoke of the great pleasure which he had always found in Trollope's novels. See *Letters*, p. 495.

9. See "The Irish Church," *Fortnightly Review*, II (August 5, 1865), 82-90; and "The Irish Church Debate," *Saint Pauls*, II (May, 1868), 147-60. In the *Clergymen of the Church of England* Trollope gives a very unflattering account of the English clergyman in Ireland as dour, bigoted, and unhappy; and he

concludes: "The anomalies of the Church of England in Ireland are terribly distressing, and call aloud for reform" (p. 118).

10. See, for example, Trollope, *The Golden Lion of Granpère*, p. 202; see also a more general statement on intolerance in *Rachel Ray*, p. 332.

11. *Letters*, p. 332.

12. Escott, *Anthony Trollope*, pp. 226-27.

13. *Fortnightly Review*, III (January 15, 1866), 529-38.

14. Anna T. Kitchel, *George Lewes and George Eliot* (New York: John Day, 1933), p. 238.

15. See Lionel Stevenson, "Dickens and the Origin of *The Warden*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, II (September, 1947), 83-91.

16. *Household Words*, V (June 12, 1852), 285-91.

17. *Autobiography*, p. 80.

18. Michael Sadleir, *Anthony Trollope: A Commentary* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1927), p. 156.

19. "Mr. Trollope's Novels," *The National Review*, VII (October, 1858), 420.

20. Escott, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 106.

21. Trollope, *The Warden* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 14.

22. See above, under "Trollope and Religion."

23. Sadleir, *Anthony Trollope: A Commentary*, p. 372.

24. Ronald Knox, "Introduction to the Barsetshire Novels" in *The Warden*, p. ix.

25. See *Letters*, pp. 265-67, 306.

26. It is well that Trollope did not take the advice of all the critics. *The National Review*, for example, insisted that a greater degree of retributive justice is needed in domestic comedy than is found in *The Warden* (p. 418), and that the heroes and heroines should be made more superior than they are (p. 419). The same critic finds the characters unattractive (p. 419).

27. *Autobiography*, p. 83.

28. Trollope, *The Warden*, p. 17.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

30. Hugh Walpole, *Anthony Trollope* (New York: Macmillan, 1928), p. 50.

31. *Letters*, p. 265.

32. *Letters*, p. 266.

33. Beatrice Curtis Brown, *Trollope* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1950), p. 38.

34. In the *Autobiography* Trollope seems to believe (p. 231) that she dies out of the bitterness of repentance for her tyranny, but, until the very last moment at least, the text does not bear out this assertion.

35. Curtis Brown, *Trollope*, p. 35.

36. In Thomas Job's dramatization of *Barchester Towers* in 1937 Madeline's importance is so exaggerated as to give her virtually the leading role. Ina Claire, playing the part on Broadway, further emphasized what was for Trollope a minor character. Needless to say, the play failed.

37. *Autobiography*, p. 58.

38. Grant Overton, *The Philosophy of Fiction* (New York: Appleton, 1928), p. 44 *et passim*.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
40. *Autobiography*, p. 106.
41. Oliver Elton, *A Survey of English Literature 1780-1880* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), IV, 307.
42. Trollope, *Doctor Thorne* (London: Dent, 1910), p. 10.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Autobiography*, p. 129.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
47. *Ibid.*
48. Stebbins and Stebbins, *The Trollopes*, p. 174.
49. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 58; Sadleir, *Anthony Trollope: A Commentary*, p. 339.
50. Curtis Brown, *Trollope*, p. 54.
51. Trollope, *Framley Parsonage*, p. 458.
52. *Autobiography*, pp. 121-22.
53. Sadleir, *Anthony Trollope: A Commentary*, p. 386.
54. *Autobiography*, p. 146.

55. It is not, apparently, one of the popular titles. On a list of the twelve best-selling Trollope novels in the World's Classics series, kindly made available to me by the Oxford University Press, *The Small House* does not even appear. The other Barsetshire novels, however, are all prominent. Since the list has several surprises, it may be of general interest. In a given number of years the novels have sold as follows:

1. <i>Barchester Towers</i> .....	42,690
2. <i>The Last Chronicle of Barset</i> .....	26,134
3. <i>The Warden</i> .....	24,760
4. <i>Autobiography</i> .....	24,031
5. <i>The Three Clerks</i> .....	23,000
6. <i>Doctor Thorne</i> .....	19,906
7. <i>Framley Parsonage</i> .....	18,417
8. <i>Is He Popenjoy?</i> .....	15,821
9. <i>The Vicar of Bullhampton</i> .....	14,873
10. <i>The Claverings</i> .....	14,638
11. <i>The Belton Estate</i> .....	12,142
12. <i>Sir Harry Hotspur of Humblethwaite</i> ....	11,621

Several factors affecting the list should be taken into consideration. During the war some titles were temporarily unavailable and others went in and out of print a number of times. But whatever minor rearrangements might be effected by a true record, it is significant that none of the Palliser novels is widely read and that *The Three Clerks* is astonishingly popular.

56. Stebbins and Stebbins, *The Trollopes*, p. 217.
57. *Letters*, pp. 152-53.
58. Trollope, *The Small House at Allington*, II, 338.
59. *Ibid.*, II, 340-41.
60. *Illustrated Times*, April 2, 1864, p. 222.

61. II, 319. Walpole calls Hopkins "one of the best gardeners in fiction" (*Anthony Trollope*, p. 62).

62. *Spectator*, XXXVII (April 9, 1864), 421-23. This is one of the most thoughtful and most understanding brief critiques of Trollope that I know.

63. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 72.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

65. See *Letters*, p. 184.

66. *Letters*, p. 317.

67. *Autobiography*, p. 229.

68. *A Fitzgerald Friendship*, ed. Neilson Campbell Hanney (New York: William Edwin Rudge, 1932), p. 90.

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Good Words*, XXIII (Christmas Supplement, 1882), 837. The Barsetshire mapmakers seem to have ignored Plumplington.

71. *Letters*, p. 465.

72. Trollope, *Rachel Ray*, p. vi.

73. Escott, *Trollope*, p. 230.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

75. Winifred Gregory Gerould and James Thayer Gerould, *A Guide to Trollope* (Princeton University Press, 1948), p. 201.

76. *The Saturday Review*, XVI (October 24, 1863), 554.

77. It is a bit odd, however, that Trollope should have added in the next paragraph, "I do not know what you who have dared to handle great names & historic times will think of this." (*Letters*, pp. 138-39.) Trollope could hardly have been ignorant of the point of view of the author of *Scenes from Clerical Life*.

78. See *Autobiography*, p. 157. The Stebbinses say that Trollope planned to leave out the love interest for three reasons: "partly as an experiment, because he found it increasingly difficult to write conventional love scenes; a little because of his special wrath at an old cleric who had been scandalized by certain passages in *Can You Forgive Her?*; a little because of a general disposition to be disagreeable owing to his pique over the postal appointment" (p. 223). He wrote some of his very best love scenes later (see *The Belton Estate* and *Ayala's Angel*); the clergyman did not write to him about *Can You Forgive Her?* until seven months after the publication of *Miss Mackenzie* (*Letters*, pp. 173-74); and there is not the slightest evidence that Trollope was so upset by failing to obtain the Assistant Secretaryship that he would do anything so absurdly irrelevant as refuse to write a love story.

79. See pp. 30-31, above.

80. *Autobiography*, pp. 171, 172.

81. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 137.

82. *Letters*, p. 189.

83. I have not been able to consult the MS. for possible revisions.

84. See pp. 215-16, below.

85. Trollope, *Linda Tressel* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 252.

86. The Geroulds' summary of *Linda Tressel* is in error. They indicate that



the novel closes with Peter Steinmarc's repudiation of Linda. Actually, Steinmarc renews his offer, and Linda, after almost going mad, escapes to Cologne, where shortly thereafter she dies.

87. Stebbins and Stebbins, *The Trollopes*, p. 237.

88. Trollope, *The Golden Lion of Granpère*, pp. 201-202.

89. Preface, *The Vicar of Bullhampton*, pp. vii-ix.

90. This phrase has been used against Trollope—unfairly, as it seems to me. He means, I feel sure, not that he wrote *only* for adolescents but that among his readers young people were certainly numbered.

91. See, for example, the *Daily Telegraph*, April 19, 1870, p. 11. Before one becomes too severe on Trollope for his guarded treatment of the "fallen woman," it is well to remember the reception of *Esther Waters* fully twenty-four years later.

92. P. 56. It is interesting to contrast James's early attack on *The Belton Estate* with his later praise of *The Vicar of Bullhampton* in *Partial Portraits*. The stories are not dissimilar in major respects, but where James was once moved by a bright juvenile's quick scorn for what is not intellectualistic, he is now appreciative of "plain good sense and good taste" (p. 44), by a "slow but excellent story" of which the "interest [is] produced by the quietest conceivable means" (p. 54).

93. Escott, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 240.

94. I do not know that the history of fiction affords another instance of a novel of real merit, running to 85,000 words, having been written in twenty-two days. Even the dubious story of the composition of *Rasselas* is no more amazing than the fact of Trollope's achievement in *Dr. Wortle's School*. Nor is this an illustration of a story brooded over for months, then rapidly set down. Only two weeks intervened between the completion of the *Thackeray* and the beginning of *Dr. Wortle's School*. It is equally surprising that in these years of obviously declining inspiration such a thoroughly satisfactory novel should have been written between *Cousin Henry* and *Marion Fay*, two of Trollope's most dismal failures.

95. There may be a memory here of Dr. William Greenleaf Eliot, founder of Washington University, St. Louis, whom Trollope had visited in that city in 1862. See *Letters*, pp. 108-109. Dr. Eliot was the grandfather of T. S. Eliot.

96. *Letters*, p. 433.

97. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 163.

98. Stebbins and Stebbins, *The Trollopes*, p. 314.

### Chapter 3: Town and Country

1. Thomas Adolphus Trollope, *What I Remember* (New York, 1888), p. 362.

2. *Autobiography*, p. 242. See also *Doctor Thorne*, p. 177; *Can You Forgive Her?*, II, 53; *The Times*, May 29, 1873, p. 12.

3. *St. Pauls*, I (October, 1876), 4. This is probably the argument of "The

Study of Politics," a lecture which Trollope is reported to have given at Leeds in 1864 but which I have unfortunately not been able to trace.

4. See Lance O. Tingay, "Trollope and the Beverley Election," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, V (June, 1950), 23-27.

5. Escott, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 249.

6. P. 16 above.

7. Sadleir, *Anthony Trollope: A Commentary*, pp. 159-60.

8. *St. Pauls*, I (December, 1867), 305. See also Trollope's denunciations of Ruskin in the *Fortnightly Review*, I (July 15, 1865), 634; V (June 15, 1866), 381-82.

9. *Autobiography*, p. 151.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

11. Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?*, I, 302.

12. *Ibid.*, I, 303.

13. *Autobiography*, p. 152.

14. Morris Edmund Speare, *The Political Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1924), p. 216.

15. These have been omitted from a recent edition of that work. See *North America*, ed. Donald Smalley and Bradford A. Booth (New York: Knopf, 1951).

16. See Letter VI in *The Tireless Traveler*, ed. Bradford A. Booth (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1941).

17. Trollope's speech is printed in the published report of the meeting. See Eastern Question Association Report of the Proceedings of the National Conference at St. James's Hall, London, December 8, 1876, pp. 19-21. Gladstone and Lord Shaftesbury were among the other distinguished speakers on the subject of England's part in the Russo-Turkish difficulties. Trollope's homely but very effective little speech was apparently well received.

18. James Bryce, *Studies in Contemporary Biography* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), p. 121.

19. See Sadleir, *Bibliography* (London, 1928), pp. 231-33.

20. See Bradford A. Booth, "Trollope and the *Pall Mall Gazette*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, IV (June, 1949), 51-69; IV (September, 1949), 137-58.

21. On pages 73-76, for example, there are four errors: Hardy for Harding, Thumble for Thumble, Scratchard for Scratcherd, and (unbelievably) "it is dogged that does it" for "it's dogged as does it."

22. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 73.

23. Trollope nowhere uses the term "parliamentary" to describe these novels and only once speaks of them as "semi-political." They are clearly less political than the Barseshire novels are clerical. In each group it is the *social scene* to which our attention is directed.

24. *Autobiography*, p. 155.

25. Henry James, "Anthony Trollope" in *Partial Portraits*, reprinted in *The Art of Fiction and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 68.

26. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 103.

27. Curtis Brown, *Trollope*, p. 38.
28. *Autobiography*, p. 146.
29. Escott, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 186.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 205.
31. Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?*, I, x.
32. Most of the critics have objected to the awkward title, but interrogative titles had been popular and continued to be. One thinks of Disraeli's *What Is He?* (1833), Bulwer's *What Will He Do with It?* (1859), Mrs. Bateman's *Who Is to Have It?* (1859), W. Clark Russell's *Which Sister?* (1873), Charles Gibbon's *What Will the World Say?* (1875), and Mrs. Linton's *Under Which Lord?* (1879).
33. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 100.
34. Stebbins and Stebbins, *The Trollopes*, p. 219.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
36. Curtis Brown, *Trollope*, p. 75.
37. Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?*, I, xiv.
38. *Autobiography*, p. 151.
39. Sadleir, *Anthony Trollope: A Commentary*, p. 388.
40. *Autobiography*, p. 153.
41. Henry James, preface to *Roderick Hudson* in *The Art of the Novel* (New York: Scribner's, 1950), p. 14.
42. Henry James, "London Notes" in *Notes on Novelists* (London: Dent, 1914), p. 349.
43. *Autobiography*, p. 154.
44. Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?*, II, 53.
45. *Autobiography*, p. 262.
46. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 107.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
49. P. 265.
50. P. 263.
51. Trollope, *Phineas Finn*, I, 199.
52. Trollope, *The Eustace Diamonds* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), I, 127.
53. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 93.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
56. Trollope, *The Eustace Diamonds*, I, ix.
57. Curtis Brown, *Trollope*, p. 61.
58. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 94.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
60. Sadleir, *Anthony Trollope: A Commentary*, p. 417.
61. This famous opinion, written for Trollope by Charles Merewether, is said still to be unchallenged in English courts.
62. Escott, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 280.
63. It is curious that of the two critics who mention the lapse of time between

the novels both give an incorrect figure. The Stebbinses (p. 271) say five years and the Geroulds (p. 192) say seven years. The text (p. 5) speaks of "Mr. Finn . . . who had held office two years ago."

64. Trollope, *The Prime Minister* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), I, x.

65. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 107.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

67. Trollope, *Phineas Redux*, I, viii.

68. *Ibid.*, I, 78.

69. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 108.

70. Curtis Brown, *Trollope*, p. 84.

71. *Letters*, p. 241.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 355.

73. Persons interested in this whole subject should read R. W. Chapman's "Personal Names in Trollope's Political Novels," in *Essays Presented to Sir Humphrey Milford* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), pp. 72, 81.

74. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 108.

75. *Autobiography*, p. 299.

76. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 110.

77. Curtis Brown, *Trollope*, p. 60.

78. *Spectator*, LI (July 22, 1876), 922.

79. *Autobiography*, p. 267.

80. *Spectator*, p. 923.

81. Miss Curtis Brown, however, says that it is "exciting" (p. 81), which is perhaps not quite the same thing.

82. Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, p. viii.

83. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 112.

84. *Ibid.*

85. See *Autobiography*, p. 298.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 299.

87. See p. 237.

88. Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, I, 303.

89. *Ibid.*, II, 120.

90. *Ibid.*, II, 382-83.

91. *Ibid.*, I, xii.

92. I am not sure that Mr. Amery would accept the following passages as representative of "political issues," but as constituting a degree of political awareness I think they merit attention: first, the Duke's impassioned speech on equality (II, 321-22), the sentiments of which are demonstrably Trollopian; and second, "The New K. G." (chapter lxiv), a long discussion between the Duke of Omnium and the old Duke of St. Bungay on the awarding of a Garter. In the latter, Miss Curtis Brown declares (p. 15), Trollope "sums up the difference between the old [political] tradition and the new as well as any historian has done." For an interesting analysis of Trollope's clear understanding of "the forces which motivated English political life in his time," see Curtis Brown, pp. 84-85.

93. *Spectator*, LIII (June 12, 1880), 754.

94. Escott, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 268.
95. See Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, pp. 25, 67.
96. I, xii.
97. Stebbins and Stebbins, *The Trollopes*, p. 296.
98. *The Art of Fiction*, p. 67.
99. Oddly enough, thirty-five years later Trollope's son Henry was to ghost-write a biography of Charles Bianconi. See *Letters*, p. 373.
100. *Autobiography*, p. 73.
101. "Mr. Anthony Trollope's Novels," *Dublin Review*, n.s., XIX (September, 1872), 406.
102. *Ibid.*
103. Escott, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 53.
104. *Autobiography*, p. 59.
105. Lest there be confusion: I do not hold with the Stebbinses, who equate Larry Macdermot with Thomas Anthony Trollope, and Thady with Anthony, suggesting that in the death of Thady, Anthony was expiating his own guilt. I do not see how criticism can be more determinedly wrong-headed than this.
106. *Letters*, p. 317.
107. *The Dublin Review* article, quoted above, called *The Macdermots* "one of the most melancholy books that ever was written" (p. 406).
108. *Autobiography*, p. 63.
109. Trollope, *The Warden*, p. 144.
110. Sadleir, *Anthony Trollope: A Commentary*, p. 135.
111. The diversity of critical opinion on this novel is surprising. Escott describes it as "clear, picturesque, and powerful . . . will almost bear comparison with the classical records of national visitations in other ages. . . . Trollope might thus nearly claim a place with Thucydides . . . Boccaccio . . . Defoe . . ." (*Anthony Trollope*, p. 129). Walpole classes it as one of Trollope's six absolute failures, which "may be eternally and remorselessly forgotten" (*Anthony Trollope*, p. 122). These opinions strike me as untenable extremes, but the Stebbinses and Sadleir are almost equally far apart.
112. See especially chaps. xxxvii and xliii.
113. Is Trollope's "Desmond" family a conscious allusion to or unconscious echo of "Esmond"? The student of sources and parallels may also wish to compare the blackmail plot in *Castle Richmond* with the almost identical one in *Pendennis*. In each novel a baronet is hounded by a miscreant, supposed long dead, who was first husband of the baronet's wife; and in each the blackguard is proved to be the real bigamist.
114. In spite of the general weakness of *Castle Richmond*, however, it is an oddity, worth recording for its inexplicability, that it was at once translated into five different languages—Dutch, Danish, French, German, and Russian. No other Trollope novel was so honored.
115. Sadleir, *Anthony Trollope: A Commentary*, p. 138.
116. Trollope, *The Landleaguers* (London, 1884), p. 260.
117. Trollope, *The Three Clerks* (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), p. 377.
118. *Ibid.*, p. 466.

119. This is the plot of *An Eye for an Eye*.
120. Trollope, *The Bertrams* (London: John Lane, 1905), p. 118.
121. Trollope, *He Knew He Was Right* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 826.
122. *Autobiography*, p. 285.
123. It might be noted that in Reade's dramatization, *Shilly-Shally*, Ralph, who is not the heir, is eliminated. The plot is thereby made tighter and much more manageable. See Bradford A. Booth, "Trollope, Reade, and *Shilly-Shally*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, I (March, 1947), 45-54; II (June, 1947), 43-51.
124. Trollope, *Ralph the Heir*, I, 90.
125. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 105.
126. Not Johnson, as Miss Curtis Brown states (*Trollope*, p. 67). At the time Trollope apparently had no special interest in Bacon. In 1879, however, he was given by his son a new edition of Bacon's essays, which he carefully annotated. See Michael Sadleir, "Trollope and Bacon's Essays," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, I (Summer, 1945); 21-34.
127. *Autobiography*, p. 285.
128. *The Graphic*, July 17, 1875, p. 62.
129. There were a few approving reviews. I note that the *Daily Telegraph* (August 21, 1875, p. 8) found "no trace of failing power" and pronounced the novel "as strong and vigorous as anything he ever did."
130. But his statement to Escott that he had not read *Little Dorrit* before 1878 is incorrect. He had not only read it on publication but had written an article on it. The evidence is discussed in Bradford A. Booth, "Trollope and *Little Dorrit*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, II (March, 1948), 237-40.
131. Escott, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 291.
132. See *Letters*, pp. 265-67. James Gibbons Huneker thought these scenes quite perfect: "Anthony Trollope filled me with pangs of envy. His longest novel, *The Way We Live Now*, and the young aristocrats of the Bear Garden Club, Dolly Longstaffe, and the others, seemed ideal." See Huneker's *Steeple-jack* (New York: Scribners, 1920), I, 125.
133. *Letters*, p. 321.
134. *Autobiography*, p. 295.
135. *Autobiography*, p. 296; *Letters*, p. 342.
136. *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 4 vols. (London: Methuen, 1911), I, 226. Stevenson's full statement should be read by the student of Trollope.
137. *Autobiography*, p. 296.
138. David Stryker, "The Significance of Trollope's *The American Senator*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, V (September, 1950), 141-49.
139. See *Letters*, p. 347. Trollope knew that the criticism would be made. See *The American Senator* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 552.
140. *Letters*, p. 359.
141. Trollope wrote to Mary Holmes: "Lord R [Rufford] is what he is, merely as an appendage to the odious female,—in whose character I wished to express the depth of my scorn for women who run down husbands." *Letters*, pp. 359-60.

142. Trollope, *The American Senator*, p. 81.
143. *Ibid.*, p. 470.
144. *Letters*, p. 364.
145. *Letters*, pp. 417-18.
146. Trollope, *The Vicar of Bullhampton* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 259-60. The reference to the *Saturday Review* points up the current interest, which as a novelist Trollope shared, in the difficulties of young women, and emphasizes the part which that journal had long played in publicizing social problems. As early as 1857 the *Saturday* featured attacks on the "modern girl." After 1865 the campaign was stepped up, culminating in Mrs. Eliza Lynn Linton's essay on "The Girl of the Period," which Merle M. Bevington, the historian of the *Saturday* has called "the most sensational middle article which that journal ever published." Within a few months it was reprinted in pamphlet form and then given the leading position in a collection of thirty-seven *Saturday Review* articles published under the title *Modern Women and What Is Said of Them*. Trollope began *The Vicar of Bullhampton* only three months after the original appearance of Mrs. Linton's article, and its strictures against young ladies were no doubt fresh in his mind.
147. *Letters*, p. 363.
148. *Letters*, p. 262.
149. Trollope, *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 354.
150. Sadleir, *Anthony Trollope: A Commentary*, p. 419.
151. *The Nation*, LXXX (June 8, 1905), 458.
152. *Athenæum*, No. 2837 (March, 1882), 314.
153. The story is told at length in Harvey Cushing, *The Life of Sir William Osler*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), I, 664-72.
154. Trollope, *Mr. Scarborough's Family* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 351.

#### Chapter 4: Theory and Tradition

1. Trollope, *The Duke's Children* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), I, 239.
2. See pp. 13-14 above.
3. *Autobiography*, pp. 179-80.
4. Trollope, "Novel Reading," *The Nineteenth Century*, V (January, 1879), 30.
5. *Robinson Crusoe*, Trollope adds, was "an accident"!
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. Trollope, *Thackeray* (New York: Harpers, n.d.), p. 164.
8. Trollope, "Novel Reading," p. 30.
9. *Autobiography*, p. 35.
10. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 157.
11. *Autobiography*, p. 191.
12. Trollope, *Thackeray*, p. 107.
13. *Autobiography*, p. 185.

14. Trollope, "Novel Reading," p. 25.
15. Trollope, *Ralph the Heir*, II, 338.
16. Sadleir, *Trollope: A Commentary*, pp. 420-21.
17. Printed in Trollope, *Four Lectures*, ed. Morris L. Parrish (London: Constable, 1938), pp. 94-124.
18. *Autobiography*, pp. 216-17.
19. *Letters*, p. 281.
20. Trollope, *Thackeray*, p. 199.
21. Trollope, "Novel Reading," p. 31.
22. *Letters*, pp. 232-34.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 77-79.
24. Trollope, "The Genius of Nathaniel Hawthorne," *North American Review*, CXXIX (September, 1879), 205.
25. *Letters*, p. 500.
26. Trollope, "Novel Reading," p. 30.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
28. Trollope, *Castle Richmond* (London, 1860), III, 32.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
30. *Autobiography*, pp. 198-99.
31. "The Genius of Nathaniel Hawthorne," p. 221. See also Trollope's remarks in *Thackeray*: "Forethought is the elbow-grease which a novelist . . . requires" (p. 119); "it is from want of this special labour, more frequently than from intellectual deficiency, that the tellers of stories fail often to hit their nails on the head" (p. 120).
32. *Autobiography*, p. 214, where Trollope gives his reasons for not much liking Wilkie Collins.
33. Trollope, *Barchester Towers*, p. 143.
34. From a manuscript critique of *Old Mortality* formerly in the possession of the late Muriel Rose Trollope.
35. *Autobiography*, p. 203.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 207-208.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 209.
39. Trollope, "Novel Reading," p. 43. See also the same remark in *Autobiography*, p. 191.
40. From the manuscript critique referred to above.
41. *Autobiography*, p. 187.
42. Trollope, "Novel Reading," p. 30.
43. Bradford A. Booth, "Trollope on *Emma*: An Unpublished Note," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, IV (December, 1949), 245-47. The MS. of this brief essay was until recently in the possession of Miss Trollope.
44. *Autobiography*, p. 206.
45. Trollope, *Thackeray*, p. 132.
46. Trollope, *The Duke's Children*, I, 244.
47. *Autobiography*, p. 207.
48. Trollope, *Thackeray*, p. 181.



49. See his discussion of this point in *Autobiography*, pp. 196-98.
50. Trollope, *Thackeray*, p. 193.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Autobiography*, p. 204.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
54. *Autobiography*, p. 216.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 210.
56. *Letters*, p. 354.
57. Trollope, *Thackeray*, p. 182.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
60. *Ibid.*
61. *Autobiography*, p. 107.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
64. *Letters*, p. 227.

### Chapter 5: The Incubus of Plot

1. See John Holloway, *The Victorian Sage* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1953), p. 11.
- \*2. Arnold Kettle, *An Introduction to the English Novel* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1951), I, 11. Cf. Henry James in "The Art of Fiction": "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?"
3. Consider, for example, what a Victorian would have thought of Gertrude Stein's assertion (in "How Writing Is Written") that "the novel which tells about what happens is of no interest to anybody."
4. E. K. Brown, *Rhythm in the Novel* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), p. 55.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
6. See the exposition of the character of Boyne Kenton in *The Kentons*.
7. *Autobiography*, p. 195.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 286.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
14. For Trollope's protest see *Autobiography*, p. 198.
15. Trollope, *Ayala's Angel* (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), p. 461.
16. See Malcolm Elwin, *Charles Reade* (London: Cape, 1931), p. 136.
17. P. 145.
18. *Autobiography*, pp. 198-99.

19. See *Autobiography*, pp. 199-201.
20. Trollope, *Lotta Schmidt: and Other Stories* (London, 1867), p. 129.
21. *Autobiography*, p. 187.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
23. See *Autobiography*, p. 187.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
25. George Eliot, "Authorship," *Leaves from a Note-Book* (New York, 1901), pp. 235-36.
26. Trollope, *The Eustace Diamonds*, p. 98.
27. Trollope, *The Claverings* (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), pp. 296-97.
28. Thackeray, *The Newcomes* (London, 1878), I, 255.
29. H. L. Mencken, *A Book of Prefaces* (New York: Knopf, 1917), p. 35.
30. André Gide, *Imaginary Interviews* (New York: Knopf, 1944), p. 14.
31. *Letters*, p. 308.
32. Thackeray, *A Journey from Cornhill to Cairo*, chap. iii.
33. Trollope, *The Three Clerks*, p. 216.
34. Trollope, *The Duke's Children*, I, 83-84. In this novel, as a matter of fact, there is no particular problem. Since the chief characters had all appeared in earlier novels of the series and were therefore familiar, Trollope apparently did not feel the necessity of an extended introduction.
35. *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Sidney Colvin (London: Methuen, 1911), I, 266.
36. Trollope, *The Bertrams*, p. 231.
37. Trollope, *Dr. Wortle's School* (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), pp. 27-28.
38. See Letter of Dedication to *Basil*.
39. Henry James, *The Art of Fiction and Other Essays*, p. 59.
40. Trollope, *The Claverings*, p. 149.
41. Trollope, *The Way We Live Now*, I, 11.
42. Trollope, *The Three Clerks*, p. 554.
43. Trollope, *Orley Farm*, I, 183.
44. Trollope, *Doctor Thorne*, p. 476.

### Chapter 6: Character or the Real Thing

1. See also pp. 207-208 below.
2. George Eliot, "Story Telling," *Leaves from a Notebook*, pp. 240-43.
3. Edgar Johnson, "Bleak House: The Anatomy of Society," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, VII (September, 1952), 73, 75; reprinted in *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952), II, 762-82.
4. F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1950), p. 21.
5. Johnson, "Bleak House," p. 75.
6. Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, p. 2.

7. *Autobiography*, p. 189.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
9. Queenie D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1934), p. 34.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 233.
11. Denys Thompson, *Reading and Discrimination* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1934), p. 34.
12. Van Wyck Brooks, *New England: Indian Summer* (New York: Dutton, 1940), p. 183.
13. Trollope, *The Claverings*, p. 296.
14. Trollope, *Ralph the Heir*, II, 337. See also *Ayala's Angel*, p. 363; *The Eustace Diamonds*, p. 568; *The Three Clerks*, p. 557.
15. Trollope, *The Small House at Allington*, II, 163-64.
16. Ellen Glasgow, *A Certain Measure* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1934), p. 102.
17. *Autobiography*, p. 215.
18. *The Art of Fiction*, p. 67.
19. *Daily Telegraph*, June 7, 1869, p. 5.
20. *The Art of Fiction*, p. 67.
21. Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, I, 4.
22. *Ibid.*, I, 5.
23. Trollope, *Framley Parsonage*, p. 23.
24. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 58.
25. Russell Fraser, "Anthony Trollope's Younger Characters," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, VI (September, 1951), 105.
26. Trollope, *Doctor Thorne*, p. 6.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 168-69.
28. *Autobiography*, p. 140.
29. This is precisely the attitude taken by the author of a long essay-review in the *National Review*, XVI (January, 1863), 27-40.
30. Trollope, *Orley Farm*, II, 53.
31. *Ibid.*, II, 404.
32. Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?*, I, 308-309.
33. See Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction* (New York: Peter Smith, 1947), pp. 110-11.
34. Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?*, II, 324-25.
35. Trollope, *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, I, 108-109.
36. Trollope's dramatization of *The Last Chronicle* has recently been published by the Princeton University Library. Unfortunately it is only the decapitated skeleton of the novel, and is bad enough to make one weep.
37. Edith Wharton, *The Writing of Fiction* (New York: Scribners, 1925), p. 73.
38. C. H. Rickword, "A Note on Fiction," in *Forms of Modern Fiction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1948), p. 295.
39. Hawthorne and George Eliot very nearly qualify for this category.
40. Henry James reviewed four of the Trollope novels, wrote a full-length

critical essay, and referred to him repeatedly in "The Art of Fiction" and in his notebooks. Indeed, only George Eliot among the nineteenth-century novelists received more attention.

41. Henry James, *Notes and Reviews* (Cambridge, Mass.: Dunster House, 1921), p. 127.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

44. "Trollope," reprinted in *The Art of Fiction and Other Essays*, p. 49. Unfortunately, the essay was written a few months before Trollope's *Autobiography* was published.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

49. *Autobiography*, pp. 194-95.

### Chapter 7: The Trollopian Triad

1. *The Water Babies* is the exception that tests my sweeping generalization.

2. Leavis shows his hand when he calls Dickens's least characteristic novel, *Hard Times*, his greatest. Despite a few good touches *Hard Times* is a feeble melodrama, about as bad in characterization as Dickens can be; but its sober-sided political and social message, grossly stated, has given it a modern revival.

3. Trollope, *Phineas Redux*, I, 231.

4. Trollope, *The Way We Live Now*, II, 279.

5. Trollope, *The Warden*, p. 60.

6. This graphic scene, which closes the novel, was to have tragic repercussions in real life. An entry in Gerard Manley Hopkins's notebooks (for September 18, 1872) indicates that a schoolboy, having read a novel of Trollope's in which a hanging is described (presumably *The Macdermots*) killed himself in re-enactment of the scene. See *The Notebooks and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 168.

7. Christopher La Farge, "I Knew He Was Right," *Saturday Review of Literature*, XXI (January 27, 1940), 13.

8. *Letters*, p. 283.

9. *Autobiography*, p. 171.

10. *Autobiography*, p. 278.

11. Trollope, *Framley Parsonage*, pp. 393-94.

12. Trollope, *Barchester Towers*, pp. 294-95.

13. Henry James, *The Golden Bowl* (New York: Grove Press, 1952), p. 126.

14. Herbert Spencer, *Philosophy of Style* (New York: Allyn and Bacon, 1917), p. 49.

15. Trollope, *Framley Parsonage*, p. 426.

16. *Autobiography*, p. 149.

17. "In the least good of Trollope's tales [the by-talk] rambles on for page

after page before the reader resignedly marking time, arrives, bewildered and weary, at a point to which one paragraph could have carried him." Edith Wharton, *The Writing of Fiction*, p. 74.

### Chapter 8: The Chaos of Criticism

1. George Saintsbury, "Trollope Revisited," *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), p. 46.
2. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 122.
3. *Holmes-Laski Letters*, ed. Mark De Wolfe Howe, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), I, 563.
4. Stebbins and Stebbins, *The Trollopes*, p. 160.
5. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 122.
6. Stebbins and Stebbins, *The Trollopes*, p. 171.
7. Henry James, *Notes and Reviews* (Cambridge, Mass., 1921), p. 128.
8. Walpole, *Anthony Trollope*, p. 143.
9. T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932), p. 132.

## INDEX

This index includes references to all persons and to titles of all literary works mentioned in the text. Under Trollope's name will be found (1) a list of general topics referring to aspects of his life and qualities of his personality, and (2) a list of elements of his critical theory that are discussed. Novels are indexed not under the author but separately by title.

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